FIFTEENE

SERMONS,

VPON THE SONG OF SALOMON.

Written by GEORGE GYFFARD, *Preacher of the Word at Mauldin in Essex.*

Bible
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TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE, AND HIS very good Lord, *Robert Deuereux*, Earle of Essex and Ewe, Vicount Hereford and Bourgcher, Lord Ferrers of Chartly, Bourgcher and Louaine, Knight of the honorable Order of the Garter, Master of the Horse, Generall of her Maiesties Ordnance and Munition, one of her most honorable priuie Councell, and Earle Marshal of England:

G. Gyfford wisheth encrease of all true honor in this life, and eternall felicitie in the life to come.

IEsus Christ, the King of Kings, betrothed himselfe to his Church of olde time: she is become his spouse whom he loueth deerely. The mariage shall be at the generall iudgement in the end of this world, when it shall be solemnized with great ioy and triumph, as it is written: *I heard as*

the voyce of a great multitude, and as the voyce of many waters, and as the voyce of ſtrong thundrings, ſaying, Halleiu-iah: for our Lord God almightie hath raigned. Let vs be glad and reioyce, and giue glorie to him: for the mariage of the Lambe is come, and his wife hath made her ſelfe readie. Reuel. 19. verſ. 6. 7. In the meane time, while ſhe is a pilgrime here vpon earth, there is (according to the ancient maner) a Loue-ſong betweene them, which king Salomon framed and penned, not guided by humane wiſedome, but by the inſpiration of the heauenlie ſpirit. As it is a ſong betweene the two chief ſtates, the higheſt Lord and the greateſt Ladie; ſo doth it containe the greateſt myſteries, the moſt ſweete and comfortable

doctrine, and is therfore worthily named the Song of Songs. In it this Bridegrome and his Bride do highly extoll and praise each other. To set foorth his excellent dignity, his riches and glory, with all those sweete things that flow vnto her from him, she doth bring in all the stateliest, the richest, the goodliest, and the sweetest things vnder heauen. The like doth he in praising her beautie, and her delectable sweetnes. From hence doth spring that great delight and pleasure which the one taketh in the other, where they doo (as it were) vnfolde the vehement passions of their loue, with that feruent desire which he hath to bee most neerely ioyned vnto him, and to dwell with him for euer.

Alſo there doo many goodly to-
kens paſſe betweene them: for he
beſtoweth vppon her verie rich
iewels and heauenly ornaments
to deck & to beautifie her withall:
and ſhe againe rendreth vnto him
the ſweet fruits of her loue. More-
ouer her frailties, her imperfecti-
ons, and her vnkinde dealing at
ſometimes towards her welbelo-
ued, are not omitted, nor the ſore
afflictions which by that occaſion
ſhe doth endure. And finding that
his Loue is moſt ſtedfaſt, nothing
altred nor diminiſhed by her frail-
tie & vndutifulnes towards him,
ſhe is the more enflamed to ſeeke
after him, and to craue his pre-
ſence and protection, while ſhe is
here below in the midſt of ſo ma-
ny cruell enemies. Manie other

ſpecial things there be which I do here omit. I doo offer this booke vnto your Lordſhip, not that I eſteeme my ſlender labours in expounding it, worthie to come into your honourable hands: but for the excellent worthines of the matters therein contained. The Princes and Nobles of the earth are delighted to heare of matters which are ſtately, magnificall and of great glorie: becauſe great things doo become great ones. Here are the greateſt of all. The Kings & Emperors of this world, eſpecially in their chiefe ſolemnities, as in the day of their Coronation, or at the marriage of their ſonnes and daughters, doo ſhew a great glorie in riches and delicate pleaſures: but if we compare them

with the glorie, the riches & pleaſures of this Bridegrome and his Bride, they ſhall be found to bee but beggerly traſh. For what are earthly, carnall, and tranſitorie things, compared with the things which are ſpirituall, heauenly and euerlaſting? Alſo if great matters delight men, which appertain vnto others, how much more the greateſt, which concerne themſelues? For who is the Bride in this Song that is ſo deare vnto Chriſt, vpon whom ſo many ornaments & goodly iewels are beſtowed? Verily the whole church: but yet ſo the whole, as euerie faithful ſoule is the ſpouſe decked and made beautifull for ſo glorious an husband. The blindnes and mad follie of the worlde is here

here to be wondred at. Behold the wiſedome of the fleſh which glorieth in it ſelfe. If one ſhould forſake an infinite treaſure of pearle & precious ſtones, & lay hold of an heape of droſſe, for ſome glittering ſhew making choice of it; all men would haue him in deriſion. The fooliſhnes of the wiſeſt worldlings is much greater, while they ſo ſet their hearts vpõ earthlie riches, carnall delights, the pompe and gloric of this world; & are ſo drowned in the vncleane luſts and pleaſures of ſinne, that they neglect the heauenlie treaſure, the rich iewels, and comelie ornaments, ſpirituall ioy, & glory which the Bridegrome Ieſus chriſt beſtoweth vpon his Spouſe. There is no care in ſeeking after them:

they delight to haue their bodies ſet forth and made glorious with goodlie attire, not caring how they defile the garments of their ſoule, or what filthie and ſtinking rags of vices it be clothed withall. I do not ſpeake this, as though a mã could not haue both the glory of this world, & that glorie which is from aboue: for king Dauid had both the one and the other: ſo had Salomon, with many other Kings and Nobles of the earth. But where any are ſo ouerwhelmed, & euen drowned in the gulfe of vaine delights, and ſo reſt in the glory of this world, as a thing to be gloried in, that they cannot ſeeke after the heauenly glorie, there is the fooliſhnes. It is no marueile that the holie Ghoſt ter-

meth

meth the great wiſe men of this world fooles: for who ſeeth not how ſuddenly all vaniſheth away, as a ſhadowe that is here below? King Dauid (in Pſal. 16.) glorieth that God was the portion of his inheritance, and ſaith hee had a faire heritage. But by and by, hee giueth thankes to God that gaue him counſell, yea euen by ſecret inſpiratiõs in the night: for if God had not taught him, he could neuer haue made ſo good a choiſe. It was alſo by faith, that Moſes, when he was come to age, refuſed to be called the ſonne of Pharaohs daughter: and choſe rather to ſuffer aduerſitie with the people of God, then to enioy the pleaſures of ſinnes for a ſeaſon. Eſteeming the rebuke of Chriſt greater

riches

riches then the treasures of Egypt: for hee had respect vnto the recompence of the reward. Heb. 11. vers. 24. 25. 26. Your Lordship is taught of God to follow these, and to make the like choise, as it doth manifestly appeare by your singular loue & care to aduance his glorious Gospell: which maketh mee to hope that my rude boldnes shall obtain pardon. The most high God increase and stablish your Honor, not onely on earth, but also for euer in the high heauens.

Amen.

Your Honors most dutifull to command,

George Gyffard.

SERMONS VPON THE SONG OF SALOMON.

THE FIRST SERMON.

CHAP. I.

1 *The Song of Songs, which was Salomons.*

2 *Let him kisse me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy loue is better then wine.*

3 *Because of the sauour of thy good ointments, thy name is as an ointment powred out: therfore the virgins do loue thee.*

4 *Draw me, we will runne after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers, we will be glad and reioyce in thee, wee will remember thy loue more then wine, the righteous do loue thee.*

5 *I am blacke, O daughters of Ierusalem, but comely, as the tents of Kedar, and as the curtains of Salomon.*

6 *Regard ye me, not because I am blacke, for the Sunne hath looked vpon me: the sonnes of my mother were angrie with me, they made me the keeper*

keeper of the vines, but I kept not mine owne vine.

7 Shew me, O thou whom my soule loueth, where thou feedest, where thou liest at noone: why should I be as she that turneth aside to the flockes of thy companions?

BEfore that I enter into the handling of these words, which I haue now read vnto you: it shall not be amisse to speake a few things in generall, touching this Song, that you may first looke vpon it, as vpon a goodly rich peece of work but foulded vp, and then afterward haue it vnfoulden and spread before your eyes, to the viewing of euery part thereof. Here be diuers persons brought in vttring their parts in it, but especially two, which are Louers, betrothed each vnto the other. This is so cleere and so euidēt by the words, that none can deny it. It is then, without all controuersie, a Song betweene a Bridegrome and a Bride, or a Song of betrothings: for it was the maner in old time to haue mariage songs and songs of espousals. True it is, that this Bridegrome and this Bride are not named by any proper names in all this Song; but yet it is out of controuersie, and as cleere as the Sunne who they bee, by that description which is made of them. For he is described to be a king, and of that glorie and maiestie

which

which no mortall creature hath: and her beautie and glorie also is set forth to be such, as farre surmounteth all the glorie of this world. Then of necessitie it doth follow, that this Bridegrome is Iesus Christ the Redeemer and Sauiour of the world, and this Bride is his Church. These be the two vehement Louers which are here brought in. The holy Scriptures in other places doe vse these speeches of Christ and his Church, as that they are betrothed, and shall be married. For the Church is called *the bride the Lambs wife*, Reuel. 21. vers 9. And the day of iudgement is called *the day of their marriage*, Reuel. 19. vers. 7. Also Iohn the Baptist when some were displeased that Christ should haue more honor then he, frameth this answere vnto them euen from this Song, saying, *He that hath the bride is the bridegrome: but the friend of the bridegrome which standeth and heareth him, reioyceth greatly, because of the bridegromes voyce.* Ioh. 3. vers. 29. Where you may see how he calleth Christ the bridegrome, his Church the bride, and himselfe the bridegromes friend. Christ calleth himselfe the bridegrome, Mark. 3. It was the ancient maner, that the parties which should bee man and wife were betrothed, and thē after some distance of time, the mariage was solemnized. Betweene the time of their betrothing and the marriage day, tokens of loue and kindnes did vse to passe betweene them: but when they are married, the

wife

wife is receiued into the societie of her husband, to be partaker with him of all his riches and possessions. The Lord Iesus hath betrothed himself to his holy spouse the Church, euen from the time of this promise made vnto Adam and Eue, *The seede of the woman shall breake the serpents head.* Genes. 3. The marriage betweene them shall be solemnized *at the day of iudgement*, as I noted before, Reuel. 19. 7. Then shall she be receiued to dwell with him in the heauens, and bee partaker of his riches and glorie. In the meane time, while she is here in this world, he sheweth great kindnes towards her, comforteth, supporteth and defendeth her, bestowing also manie goodly gifts and ornaments vpon her, and she againe for her part rendreth the tokens of her loue towards him: and this song setteth forth all these things which doe thus passe between them. But you must note that all their speech is vnder an Allegorie: for when each of them doth praise the beautie and comelines of the other, looke what is beautifull, comely, or stately vnder heauen, it is brought in for to expresse the same. And to represent the spirituall and heauenly ornaments and iewels which he bestoweth vpon her, and the fruites of her loue which she rendreth vnto him for the same, here are reckoned vp all the sweetest, the richest, & the most precious things that are found among men. There is but one bridegrome, and one bride: for all the elect from

the

the beginning of the world vnto the ende, doe make but one holy Catholike Church, being all coupled together by one spirit, to make one bodie, whereof Christ is the head: but yet heere are diuers persons brought in besides in this song, sometime speaking, and sometime spoken vnto. Yea, the bride speaketh now and then of her mother, and of her little sister. Here we must note, that it was the maner of old, that the bridegroome had yong men to be his companions, and so this bridegroome hath his companions or friends, not onely the holy Angels which minister vnto him for the seruice of his Church, Heb. 1. but also the Prophets, the Apostles, and all faithfull pastors and teachers, as Iohn the Baptist termeth himselfe one of his friends. Also the bride had virgins to bee her companions, and with these this spouse of Christ is sayd to be also accompanied: these are called the daughters of Ierusalem. And touching the other matter that she hath a mother and a sister, that may seeme somewhat harder to be vnderstood: for her mother is the true Church, & her little sister also is the true Church, and yet but one true Church: how may this be? This is easily answered: for it is the maner in the Hebrew tongue to call the whole the mother, and the parts of the whole are called daughters and sisters. Then marke this, that although there bee but one vniuersall Church, yet because the same is neuer whole in the world at one time, the

whole Church vpon earth is sayd to haue another, for she is but a part of the vniuersal Church. And then further, the Church vpon earth in Salomons time did consist of the nation of the Iewes: the Church of the Gentiles was not as then come, which is called her little sister. Thus much may suffice touching this song in generall, and now let vs come to the words of the text.

These seuen verses which I haue read vnto you, are first to be deuided into two parts, whereof the one is the generall title or inscription of this whole booke contained in one verse: the other is the first speech of the bride expressed in fiue verses following. As touching the title, it doth shew vnto vs two things: namely, that it is a Song of Songs, and that king Salomon did frame it and write it. The former speech may be expounded two wayes, as to say, it is all but one song, and yet it containeth in it diuers songs. A song of songs, euen a song that consisteth of diuers songs: that is one way. Or rather after the vsuall phrase of the Hebrew tongue, a song of songs is as much as to say, the principall or most excellent song of all others. This title then is giuen to commend vnto vs the worthines of it, to the end that wee may esteeme it accordingly: but let vs see how farre the comparison reacheth, that is, with what songs it is compared, whether it bee sayd to bee the most principall of all the songs which are in the holy Scriptures, or of

those

thoſe onely which king Salomon made: for hee made a thouſand and fiue, 1.King.4. Now as this word (which) in our Engliſh tongue is vſed without difference of Number or Gender: ſo is the word *aſher* in the Hebrew tongue, that ſignifieth (which) in our tongue. Then if wee ſhould tranſlate it in the plurall number and ſay thus, the ſong of ſongs which were Salomons, the compariſon ſhould be but in this maner; this is the principall or the moſt excellent ſong of all thoſe thouſand and fiue ſongs, which were Salomons. But if we take it in the ſingular number, and ſay thus; the ſong of ſongs, which was Salomons: then doth the compariſon ſtand generall, as if he ſhould ſay, this ſong which Salomon made, is the chiefe and the moſt worthie ſong of all other which are ſet foorth in the holie Scriptures. And this latter I take to be the right. There be many Pſalmes and many Songs in the ſacred Bible, which doe excell all other Songs that haue been in the world, and no one of them but is very precious: yet this ſong excelleth them all: for if a man vnderſtand it, he ſhall be forced to confeſſe, that there is not the like ſweetnes and comfort in any ſong. Seeing then that the holy Ghoſt hath thus praiſed it vnto vs, let vs giue all diligence to attaine to the true ſenſe and vnderſtanding of it, that wee may haue the vſe of it to our ioy and comfort, as of a moſt precious iewell. And when we reade that it was Salomons, wee

are not to ſtay in the man: but we muſt conſider that he was a Prophet, and ſo in this worke but the inſtrument and pen of the holy Ghoſt. It is not the word then of a man, (though he were the wiſeſt man) but the word of God, and with ſuch a minde wee are to receiue it. Thus much touching the title or inſcription.

Let him kiſſe me with the kiſſes of his mouth, &c. The bride doth begin this worthy ſong, and (as you ſee) ſhe crieth out with a wonderfull deſire of her Loue Chriſt, to haue his preſence, and to bee imbraced of him, and to dwell with him. For all her ſpeech in theſe ſixe verſes tendeth to that one thing, ſauing that in the fift and ſixt verſe ſhe doth take away an obiection which may bee made againſt her: namely, that ſhe is blacke, and therefore nothing meete to bee the ſpouſe of ſuch an one as ſhe ſpeaketh of. But what? ſhal we take it then, that the Church doth firſt ſeek after Chriſt; becauſe ſhe is firſt brought in after this vehement maner, crying out to bee with him? Doth not the holy Scripture teach the contrarie, and ſay plainly, *we loue him, becauſe he loued vs firſt?* 1. Ioh. 4. verſ. 19. Yea, and if you marke well her ſpeeches, you may ſee that it is his loue towards her gone before, which draweth her thus carneſtly to ſeeke after him. She had felt his loue, and ſaith it is better then wine. She had found the ſweetnes of his graces and heauenly gifts, and therefore (as ſhe confeſſeth) doth loue him.

him. He had let her see what rich treasures hee hath layd vp in store for her, and that enflameth her with a burning desire to be ioyned with him. And now touching her maner of phrase, *Let him kisse me with the kisses of his mouth:* we see that this beginning is according to that allegorie vnder which the whole song is written. True louers which are betrothed, and haue promised mariage each to the other, do with kisses expresse their loue. The Church then being betrothed vnto Christ, vnder this gesture of louers, expresseth her ardent desire of a neerer presence of him her spouse, that he may imbrace her, and giue her yet greater tokens of his loue, yea bee ioyned most neerely vnto her for euer. Where loue is hot, there be great passions in the minde, and the speeches which do expresse the same are patheticall. Euen so here this holy bride, this chaste and pure virgin, breaketh forth into her speech with an exclamation, which is full of passions, not of naturall passions, but of spirituall loue and zeale, with which she is enflamed, and euen as it were with an impatience desireth a neerer coniunction with Christ. But let vs come yet more neerely into the examination of her words, and more fullie to see her affection. You see that she doth vehemently desire not onely to bee kissed of her spouse, but also as she saith, *with the kisses of his mouth.* Here you must marke well, why she calleth them the kisses of his mouth: for this is not a

ſuperfluous ſpeech. Out of his mouth proceedeth that ſacred word, which is the inſtrument whereby ſhe is ioyned vnto him. For by the liuely oracles, he calleth her, hee lighteneth her, hee worketh faith in her, he armeth her againſt her enemies, he feedeth her: yea to ſpeake briefly, he conueieth all his graces and all good things into her, euen by the ſame his word. No marueile then though ſhe bee enflamed with the deſire of the kiſſes of his mouth. From hence it is, that Dauid doth ſo highly commend the holy doctrine of the Lord, that it is perfect, pure and infallible, and of ſuch worthie operation and effects in the beleeuers, that he ſaith, it is more to bee deſired then gold, yea then much fine gold, ſweeter then the honie or the honie combe. Pſal. 19. But was the holy ſpouſe at any time without the word? for ſhe ſeemeth to crie for that which ſhe had not. Chriſt did kiſſe his beloued ſpouſe with ſome kiſſes of his mouth euen from the beginning: for he did betroth himſelfe vnto her by his word, his couenant, and promiſes, euen at the firſt. But marke how in his holy wiſedome hee hath diſpoſed the matter, ſo as he commeth neerer and neerer as it were by degrees, euen vnto the full and perfect coniunction. Adam and all the holy Fathers before the floud had his worde and couenant, by which he did aſſure them of his loue and fauour vnto eternall ſaluation. He renewed his promiſe with Abraham, Izhak and

Iaakob.

Iaakob. And after that the children of Israel were come out of the bondage of Egypt, he did more fully deliuer his lawes and ordinances vnto them by Moses. But as yet all things were vnder figures and shadowes. Moses and all the Prophets did foreshew, that in the fulnes of time the bridegrome himselfe would come in his owne person and fulfill all things. Then commeth the cleere light of the Gospell, and this is one of the kisses of his mouth which she so vehemently desireth. All the Patriarkes, Prophets and holy ones, did wonderfully long to see the bridegrome manifested in the flesh. And therefore Christ telleth his disciples, saying, *Blessed are the eyes that see that ye see. For I tell you that many Prophets & Kings haue desired to see those things which you see, and haue not seene them: and to heare those things which ye heare, and haue not heard them.* Luke 10. vers. 24. This is (as I sayd) one of the kisses of his mouth, which the holy spouse did so vehemently desire. And she did know that there is yet a neerer kisse of his mouth, and that is when he shall say, *Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdome, &c.* Matth. 25. And for this is now her most earnest desire. For as S. Iohn witnesseth, *the Spirit and the bride say, Come.* Reuel. 22. 17. At the receiuing of this kisse she shall be ioyned with him for euermore: and therefore she desireth this day aboue all other. Here then wee may see, that while this holy virgin, the Lambes wife,

is here below vpon the earth, yet her heart is in the heauens, her ioy is with her beloued, vnto whom she desireth to bee ioyned. Is this the true Church? What shall we say then of them which are so worldly minded, that they neuer long after these kisses of the bridegrome? Are their affections set vpon heauenly things, as S. Paul requireth? Col. 3. Beloued, let euery man trie himselfe. If yee feele the desire to bee ioyned with Christ by a true and liuely faith, which is ingendred by his word, euen as it were by the kisses of his mouth, and that ye long to be with him in the heauens, blessed are ye: worldlings haue no such longing.

It followeth, *For thy loue is better then wine.* In these words she rendereth a reason of that her most vehement desire which she hath to be ioyned with him. The summe of it is, that his loue wherewith he hath loued her first, is so sweet and comfortable, as that it is beyond all comparison. She saith it is better then wine, and wine is a very precious thing, which is (as the scripture saith) giuen to comfort mans heart. Psal. 104. And because wine is as a principall thing in banquets, it is here put for all the daintie, delicate, sweet and comfortable or costly things in the world, which the greatest kings do vse in feasts and banquets. Sweete and daintie they be indeed vnto the carnall man: and while the children of this world doo seeke very greedily to fill and stuffe themselues

lues with the ſame, repoſing their chiefe felici-
e and comfort therein; the holy ſpouſe ſhew-
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nd comfort in their banquetting, as ſhe doth in
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ll of all. It is from hence, that ſhe knoweth he
ould giue himſelfe for her, that he might ſan-
ifie her and clenſe her by the waſhing of water
rough the word, that he might make her vnto
mſelfe a glorious Church, not hauing ſpot or
rinckle, &c. Epheſ. 5. verſ. 25. 26. 27. The whole
mber of the elect were in themſelues vnder
e thraldome of ſinne and condemnation, and
ould all haue gone to hell, but that as S. Iohn
ith, he loued vs and waſhed vs from our ſinnes
his bloud, and made vs kings and prieſts to
God his father. Reuel. 1. verſ. 5. 6. Is not heere a
weete loue, which is better (as ſhe ſaith) then
ine? This loue did Moſes feele through faith,

and

and it caused him to refuse to be called the sonne of Pharoes daughter, and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, then to enioy the pleasures of sinne for a season, esteeming the rebuke of Christ greater riches then the treasures of Egypt, Heb. 11. This loue did Saint Paul (who before was a blasphemer and a persecutor) feele the sweetnes of, and it caused him, as a man crucified to the world, to despise all earthly treasures, and to say, I desire to be dissolued and to be with Christ. We reade of a woman in the gospell, which washed the feete of our Lorde with teares, and wiped them with the hayres of her head, she loued much, for in the aboundance of his loue, shee felt that hee had forgiuen her many sinnes. And doubtles euery soule, which through a true and liuely faith doth apprehend the forgiuenes of sinnes in his blood, crieth out, *Let him kisse me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy loue is better then wine.*

It followeth, *Because of the sauour of thy good oyntments, thy name is an oyntment powred out, therefore the virgins doo loue thee.* In this verse she rendreth a reason, why her heart is so set vpon him, and why shee doth so loue him, that in comparison of him, she renounceth all the glorie and riches, and pleasures of this world, vtterlie despising them as drosse and vanitie. Her reason is drawne from the excellencie of her beloued: that he is full of sweete things, by which he doth

perfume

erfume her, and ſo maketh her ſweete alſo. For
at which giueth the ſweeteſt ſauour, maketh a
an to couet moſt after it. Her ſpeech where-
ith ſhe ſetteth forth the commendation of his
eetnes, is framed according to the figures of
e law. God commaunded Moſes to make a
ecious oyntment, and therwith to annoynt the
bernacle and the miniſtring veſſels, alſo Aaron
d his ſonnes, Exod. 30. And as it is in Pſal. 133.
is oyntment was powred vpon ỹ head of Aa-
n, and went down to the skirts of his clothing.
ereby was figured the annointing of ỹ ſonne of
d our Lord Ieſus with ỹ holy Ghoſt, according
it is written, the ſpirit of the Lord is vpon me,
cauſe he hath annointed me, &c, Eſa. 61. He is
erefore Chriſt, euen the Lords annoynted, he in
r nature, ỹ is in the manhood, as the head ouer
e whole Church, hath receiued the fulnes of all
ces, as it is written, that God gaue not the ſpi-
e to him by meaſure, Iohn 3. verſ. 34. And that
pleaſed the Father, that in him all fulnes ſhould
vell, Coloſſ. 1. 19. Here is then the veſſell,
ich as the rich treaſurie is full of all heauenly
d moſt ſweete graces, euen the man Ieſus
riſt. But marke how the bride doth proceede
rther in this matter. If a ſweete oyntment bee
oſed vp in a veſſell, it remaineth ſweete within
ſelfe, and within the veſſell, the ſauour of it is
tle felt to thoſe that come neere it, but when it
powred forth, then the ſweetnes thereof doth

ſpread

ſpread and perfume all. We reade in the goſpell of a woman which had a boxe of very coſtlie oyntment of ſpikenard, and ſhe brake the boxe and powred the oyntment vpon the head of Ieſus as he ſate at table, Marke 14. verſ. 3. and the houſe was filled with the ſauour of the oyntment, Iohn 12. verſ. 3. So, marke how ſhe ſpeaketh here, *At the ſauour of thy good oyntments, thy name is as an oyntment powred out:* For by this ſhe ſheweth that the bridegrome her welbeloued doth not as a cloſe veſſell keepe into himſelfe thoſe ſweete graces wherewith he is annointed, but that they are in deepe powred forth vpon her, to annoynt her, and to make her ſweete alſo. The graces of Chriſt which are here called his ſweet oyntments, are powred forth indeede, and doo flow from him the head into all parts of his myſticall bodie, that is to ſay, vpon all the members of his Church, which being made partakers of his annoynting, and called Chriſtians: as it is written of his fulnes we all receiue, euen grace for grace, Iohn 1. verſ. 16. But marke now how his name is as an oyntment powred forth. He fulfilled all righteouſnes, Matth. 3. verſ. 15. He offered himſelfe by his eternall ſpirite without ſpot vnto God, Hebr. 9. verſ. 14. He hath by this ſacrifice of himſelfe euen by the blood of his croſſe, appeaſed the wrath of his Father, and made reconciliation for the ſinnes of the world. He doth cloath all his elect with his owne holines: he doth

ſlay

y ſinne in them, and repleniſheth them with
e vertues and graces of his ſpirite, thus is his
me as a precious oyntment powred out. And
erefore (ſaith ſhe) the virgins doo loue thee.
hen Chriſt crucified is preached, when the ver-
e and power of his death and reſurrection are
ewed, when all his graces are diſplaied and
ide open, then is, as it were, the boxe of the
od oyntments broken, and his name is as an
ntment powred forth, then is there a moſt
eet ſauour, which cauſeth the virgins to loue
m. Thus you ſee that the ſweetnes of his graces
d heauenly gifts powred forth vpon her, haue
flamed her heart with this vehement loue and
ſire to he with him. All men are by nature vn-
cane, filthie, ſtinking and loathſome: but all
o not ſo well perceiue it, onely the regenerate
o come to the true ſenſe of the loathſome ſa-
ur of their ſinnes, and feele that they are made
eete by his ſweete oyntments, and theſe are
ey that doo loue him. But how is this, that
ee ſaith the virgins doo loue him? Is there
y other virgin that doth loue Chriſt beſides
r ſelfe? Is not ſhee alone his ſpouſe, and the
nely chaſte and pure one? Who then bee theſe
irgins that ſhee ſpeaketh of? They bee her
aughters, they be her companions, they be her
elfe. For though ſhe be but one, if we reſpect
he whole bodie, yet becauſe ſhee conſiſteth of
any, euen of all the elect, ſhe ſpeaketh alſo of

her

herſelfe as of many. She is a chaſt virgin, and euery faithful ſoule is as a chaſt virgin vnto Chriſt. Saint Paul ſaith, he was ielous ouer the Church of Corinth with a godly ielouſie: for I haue (ſayth he) coupled you to one man, to preſent you a chaſt virgin vnto Chriſt. 2. Cor. 11. verſ. 2. Theſe virgins be all the chaſt worſhippers of God. Reuel. 14. verſ. 4. Theſe onely doe ſmell the ſweete ſauour of Chriſt. The worldlings, whom the Scripture calleth adulterers and adultereſſes, Iam. 4. verſ. 4. becauſe they doe by giuing their heart to the world, euen to vncleane luſts of the fleſh, commit ſpiritual whoredom againſt God, are drowned and ouerwhelmed in the ſtinke of filthie vncleannes, and cannot ſmell the ſweete oyntments of Chriſt: and therefore they doe not nor cannot loue him.

In the next verſe ſhe ſaith, *Draw me, wee will runne after thee: the King hath brought me into his chambers, wee will bee glad and reioyce in thee, wee will remember thy loue more then wine, the righteous do loue thee.* Here ſhe vttereth ſtill her vehement affections, and deſire to bee with her Chriſt, in diuers ſpeeches, which wee will handle briefly as they lie. We haue ſeene by her former ſpeeches, that by his loue towards her, and by the ſweetnes of his graces powred forth vpon her, ſhe is ſo enflamed with loue of him, and with the deſire of being ioyned vnto him, that in heart and mind, and affection ſhe mount-

teth

teth vp aboue the heauens, despising all things here below vnder the Sunne, either riches, pleasures or glorie, as meere trash and vanitie. Her bridegrome is farre beyond them all in price and dignitie, he is her only treasure and ioy. This (I say) we haue seene by her speech, and now is it come to this, that she sayth, *Draw me, we will run after thee?* Alas good virgin, hath shee so great a desire to runne after him, her onely ioy, in whom she knoweth is all felicitie, and do not her legs serue? Doth her strength faile? or doth she faint in the race? Doth she desire most vehemently, and yet cannot performe? Yea verily it is euen so. This is her estate. She doth plainly confesse her frailtie, and the feeblenes of her knees, that she cannot runne after him, except he draw her. What should bee the reason of this? Surely her race is vpward, and she hath a burden vpon her that presseth her downe. Yea all the virgins, all her daughters, all her companions haue their load vpon them. Though they loue Christ, yet they cannot continue their race after him any faster then hee shall draw them. If hee cease drawing, they giue ouer running. If you will demaund what it is which doth so burden and presse downe, so clog and hamper the feete, and make the knees so feeble: the holy Ghost doth tell you, if you will reade, Hebr. 12. vers. 1. The spirit and grace of God doth draw, but the corruption of our nature in euery one doth euen

striue

ſtriue to quench the ſpirit. Therefore the holie Apoſtle ſaith, the fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, ſo that you cannot doe what you would. Gal. 5. The ſame doctrine he teacheth, Romanes 7. And Chriſt Ieſus ſaid to his Apoſtles, *The ſpirit is willing, but the fleſh is weake.* Matth. 26. verſ. 41. And no man (ſaith he) commeth vnto me, except the father that ſent me, doe draw him. Ioh. 6. Marke well this prayer of the holie Spouſe: for thereby you may ſee plainly, how contrarie ſhe is to that bold and impudent ſtrumpet, the whore of Babel, euen that idolatrous Church of Rome, which maintaineth with ſharpe arguments, euen with fire & ſword, that men haue free will, and power of themſelues, being once aſſiſted by grace, to runne vnto Chriſt. The filthie harlot condemneth this holie virgin of hereſie, becauſe ſhe will not herein ioyne with her. Indeede that wicked whore ſayth, that mans will is ſo enfeebled, that without grace it can doe nothing, but preuented and holpen, and as it were ſet on foote by grace, ſhe ſaith, it can and dooth performe all things. Marke (I ſay) how the Bride doth here gainſay her: for ſhe had receiued grace, ſhe had runne, and doth runne, and craueth his graces that ſhe may runne ſtill, yea that ſhe may runne faſter, and runne to the end. It is not then (brethren) as thoſe falſe ſpirits doe beare men in hand, that man is but maimed and halfe dead, and being ſet vp and ſupported by grace, can runne then of himſelfe.

himselfe. Nay there must bee grace vpon grace still euen to the end. Hereupon the faithfull soules feeling how they bee still euen yoked with the remnants of sinne, and crying day and night vnto the Lord Iesus to quicke them, and to strengthen them, and to draw them by his liuely word and holy spirit, that they may runne after him, do farre differ from those proude hypocrites which glory in themselues, that they can runne, and can doe what they lust.

It followeth, *The King brought me into his chambers, &c.* The words which follow do shew that this clause should rather be translated thus; When the king shall bring me into his chambers: for she speaketh of a ioy and gladnes which shall follow thereupon. This is out of doubt, that hee had before this time brought her into his chambers: for she speaketh of a thing with which she was not vnacquainted. For such here among men as did betroth themselues, doe willinglie make knowne vnto them to whom they are betrothed, what riches and treasures they haue in store for them to possesse, when they shall come to bee their wiues. So our Lord Iesus Christ, hauing betrothed himselfe vnto his Church, had from time to time euen from the beginning led her into his chambers, and shewed her what treasures, riches and glorie he hath layd vp for her in the heauens. Kings haue the greatest treasures

vpon earth, and the richeſt ornaments in their chambers: this king that ſhe ſpeaketh of is the greateſt of all kings, and all the riches of the kings of this world are but droſſe, in compariſon of thoſe which he hath layd vp and reſerueth in the heauenly manſions for his beloued Spouſe. True it is that ſhe hath had but a glimmering of them, and therefore ſtill coueteth to ſee them more fullie: and her bridegrome hath opened them vnto her more fullie at ſome time then at other. He led her into the chambers in the time of the Law, and opened his treaſures vnto her, to ſhew her the riches and glorie of his kingdome which ſhe ſhall inherite with him: but this hee hath done more fullie vnder the Goſpell, ſince he was manifeſted in the fleſh: and moſt fullie it ſhall be done at the day of the mariage, when he ſhall receiue her home vnto him to dwell with him in the heauens for euer. But here it may be demanded, how hee leadeth her into his chambers, that is, into the heauens, while ſhe is yet in the earth? You muſt vnderſtand that this leading is ſpirituall: he doth giue vnto her an eye of faith, by which ſhe beholdeth the inuiſible heauenlie riches and treaſures of life. His word layeth them open, and his ſpirit giueth the ſight, as the holie Apoſtle teacheth, ſaying: *The eye hath not ſeene, and the eare hath not heard, neither haue entred into the heart of man, the things which God hath*

prepared

prepared for them that loue him. But God hath reuealed them vnto vs by his ſpirit. 1. Cor. 2. 9. 10. You ſee then that it is the holie ſpirit by which he bridegrome leadeth the bride into his chambers, to ſhew what things he hath prepared for her, which ſpirit dealeth not without the word. Then behold what is added, *We will reioyce and be glad in thee, &c.* Here is ſpirituall ioy, here is mirth and gladnes which followeth vpon the ſight of the heauenly treaſures. Take a virgin which is betrothed vnto ſome great Prince, and lead her into his chambers, and ſhew vnto her all his rich ornaments and glorie, aſſuring her that all is kept for her: will it not make her reioyce and be glad? will not her minde bee much affected with the loue of ſuch an husband? This virgin is led into the heauenly chambers, & there is ſhewed vnto her the glorie and riches of the life to come, which ſhe ſhall poſſeſſe: how is it poſſible then, but that ſhe ſhould be euen repleniſhed with ioy and gladnes? How can it be otherwiſe but that ſhe ſhall mention his loue (as ſhe ſayth) more then wine? Is there any thing in this world, which will not ſeeme vile vnto her in compariſon? Yea, wil not ſhe (that is to ſay, euen all the righteous) loue him, magnifie him, extoll and praiſe him, and his loue? Some of the children of this world, when the Goſpell is preached are a little lightened, and doe as it were peepe in

at the doores of theſe chambers of the bride-grome, and haue a little dimme ſight of the riches and glorie, and are a little moued therewith for the time vnto ioy and gladnes: but the pleaſures and cares of this world, which are deeplie ſeated in their hearts, do put out all againe. Their faith, their hope, and their ioy in heauenly things doe vaniſh, and they lay hold of things tranſitorie. Beloued, let vs take heede that wee bee not ſuch; let vs not in our vncleannes ſtand without to peepe in at the doores, and away: but let vs endeuour to be of theſe pure virgins, and ſo with our holie mother be led into the chambers, that wee may throughly view the heauenly treaſures there laid vp, and be aſſured that they be kept for vs, and ſo reioyce (as S. Peter ſayth) *with ioy vnſpeakable and glorious*, 1. Pet. 1. verſ. 4. 5. 8. for then ſhall we mention his loue more then wine, then ſhall wee deſpiſe all things here below, and we ſhall loue him. Well, let vs come now vnto her next ſpeech.

I am blacke, O daughters of Ieruſalem, but comely, &c. Now ſhe commeth to take away the obiection which may bee made againſt her after this maner: It falleth out ſometimes, that ſome doe loue them which doe not loue them againe. Thou art wrapt with a vehement loue: but is not towards ſuch a one as careth not for thee? for thou ſetteſt him forth to bee a glorious king,

ſo

ſo rich, and ſo ful of ſweet things, as that nothing
nder heauē is any thing comparable vnto him.
hou art not fit to bee the wife of ſuch an one:
ow ſhould he loue thee? for thou art black. Is
not meet that ſo goodly a king ſhould haue a
ight beautifull Queene? How can ſhe anſwere
his? She doth anſwere it fully. Firſt confeſſing
hat ſhe is black indeed. I know ẏ I am black: but
et withal I am comely, I am welfauoured. Then
he vſeth two cōpariſons: the one to ſhew her
lacknes, the other to ſet foorth her comelines.
ouching the firſt compariſon, our tranſlation
yth, *as the fruits of Kedar*: but the words are, *as*
e tents of Kedar. They were men which in hot
ountries kept cattell, and remouing from place
o place, dwelt in booths and tents. The other
ompariſon is in theſe words, *as the curtaines, or*
e hangings of Salomon. Now wee muſt know
hat in both theſe there is a figuratiue ſpeech: for
y the tents and the curtaines are vnderſtoode
hoſe that dwell in them. As if ſhe ſhould ſay, I
m black indeed, as the men in the tents of Ke-
ar which are ſunne-burnt: but yet I am come-
, as they that dwell in the Court of Salomon.
or theſe curtaines are all the hangings, yea by
hem is vnderſtood all the whole glorie of Salo-
mons Court. Wee reade in the holy Scriptures,
hat there was no glorie in the world compa-
able to the glory of king Salomon. The Queene

of Saba was astonished when she beheld it. If the spiritual comelines and beautie of the spouse of Christ, now in the time of her frailtie and imperfection, be comparable with Salomon in all his royaltie, yea doe exceed him; what shall her beautie be, when all her blacknes shall be taken away, and Christ shall wash her and make her a glorious Church not hauing spot or wrinckle? Ephes. 5.

But now where as shee confessed that shee is blacke, is it not some cause to impayre her dignitie, or may she not iustlie for the same be the lesse esteemed? No, for she doth answer to that, shewing that her blacknes is not natiue, it is not according to her spirituall birth, it is accidentarie, it is but for a time, she is but sunburnt. *Looke not vpon me* (saith she) *that I am somewhat blacke, for the sunne hath shined vpon mee.* A notable place to teach vs to take heede how we esteeme the Church of Christ: for many haue despised her, reproched and forsaken her, because shee is blacke. It hath been their vtter destruction that they could not looke into her inward beautie, and put a difference betweene her present estate of frailtie and imperfection, and that perfect beautie vnto which she shall come. This admonition which she giueth, is right necessarie at all times for her weake daughters, least they be offended and forsake her for her blacknes. But there

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is then another queſtion ariſeth: why ſhould ſhe be ſunburnt? If ſhee bee ſo great a Queene, the dearling of a moſt high and glorious King, what occaſion hath ſhe to impaire her beautie? To this ſhee anſwereth, that it is a cruell violence, and a ſpitefull iniury offered vnto her, and that by ſuch as of all other ought leaſt ſo to deale with her. She vſeth this ſimilitude, as if a young beautifull virgin dwelling in her mothers houſe, had churliſh and rough fellowes to her brethren, who in anger thruſt her out at dores to keepe the vines, and ſo ſhe is compelled to be in the ſunne, and to be ſunburnt. And ſo ſhe ſaith, *that her mothers ſonnes were angrie with her, and made her the keeper of the vines.* It is a moſt cleere caſe that the holy Church, and all her perfecteſt children doo want of the perfect beautie while they liue here, and are ſomewhat blacke, partly through ſinnes which doo remaine in them, and partlie through afflictions. I neede not ſtand to proue this, being a matter ſo euident. But herein is ſome difficultie, who they bee whome ſhee calleth her mothers ſonnes. Some haue taken it that ſhe calleth originall ſinne, euen all the concupiſcences of the fleſh which are in all the elect from the wombe, her mothers ſonnes: for by theſe ſhe is forced to commit many ſinnes which dimme her beautie, and to omit the doing her duetie in part, for her owne vine, ſhee ſaith ſhee did not keepe,

wherein the true beautie consisteth. All this is true, and according to that which Saint Paul speaketh of himselfe, Rom. 7. But I doo not see how concupiscences can be called the sonnes of her mother: for in this song she calleth the church that was of former time her mother. She doth not (as I take it) speake of any mother but one. I take it therefore rather, that shee calleth the degenerate children her mothers sonnes. They be borne in the Church, they be descended of the holy ones, they bee by outward profession the children of the true Church: but she calleth them not the sonnes of God, nor yet her brethren, for they be very bastards and degenerate children. Such were the wicked priests and false prophets in time of the law; such haue been all the heretikes, popish prelates, and sects of idolatrous and superstitious orders vnder the gospell. All these haue arrogantly chalenged to themselues the honour and dignitie of Gods Church, and with wrath and furie haue offered violence vnto the true spouse of Christ, whereof shee here complaineth. It would be a matter ouer long and tedious, for me to rehearse what persecutions and afflictions these haue laid vpon the Church, and what desolations and deformities, they haue brought vpon her. True it is, that God by these hath afflicted and chastised his chosen people for their sinnes. Then we see why she is somewhat

blacke,

blacke, and it ſtandeth vs vpon, that we take heed we deſpiſe her not for the ſame. Howſoeuer ſhe ſeemeth to the eyes of the world, to be baſe and farre vnmeete for ſuch a bridegrome, yet is ſhee beautifull in his eyes, and he will rid her and ſet her free from all infirmities, and from the violence of her cruell foes, he will make her to ſhine in perfect beautie and glorie: yea ſhee ſhall be bright as the ſunne in the firmament.

Now ſhe turneth her ſpeech againe vnto her beloued (that it may appeare hee regardeth her) praying moſt earneſtlie vnto him, that hee will ſhew her where he feedeth, and where hee cauſeth his flocke to lie downe at noone (for ſo the words are to bee tranſlated) ſhewing that if hee doo not, it would not bee for his honour, nor for her good. For the ſence of this, firſt you know that Chriſt is the great ſhepheard, and therefore the Church on earth ſeeketh onely after him to be fed. For when ſhe calleth vpon him to ſhew her where he feedeth his ſheepe, it is to this ende, that he will feede her as he fed the flocks of former times, for ſhe knoweth that there is but one true ſhepheard, who feedeth all his ſheepe with the ſame paſture: ſhe looketh for no wholeſome foode, vnles it bee with the auncient Churches. Then next, it was the maner of the ſhepheards in thoſe hote countries to driue their ſheepe in the heate of the day, vnto a place of ſhadow

where

where they might lie downe and refreſh them in that time of ỹ parching heate. The bride craueth inſtantlie of him whom ſhe loueth moſt entirelie, that hee wili ſhew vnto her the place where hee cauſeth his flocke to lie downe at noone. The ſumme of her requeſt is, that hee will not onely as her great ſhepheard, feede her with his wholeſome foode of life, but alſo that he will refreſh her, as it were in the ſhadow when the ſunne ſhineth hoteſt, that is, when perſecutions be the greateſt. For by the parching heate of the ſunne, is meant the heate of perſecution as our Sauiour teacheth, Matth. 13. A moſt worthie place to be noted, that the true Church doth not onely depend vpon Chriſt Ieſus alone for her foode, reiecting all doctrines of men, but alſo is in the middeſt of the hotteſt perſecutions refreſhed by him. When tyrants doo rage, you would thinke that the poore Church were neglected of him, as moſt wretched and miſerable: but it is nothing ſo, for euen then doth hee refreſh her in his comfortable ſhadow: for the faithfull receiuing the comforter whom he ſendeth, Iohn 16. Doo reioyce in afflictions, Rom. 5. verſ. 3. And when they haue trouble in the world, they haue peace in Chriſt, Iohn 16. verſ. 33. Beholde the wonderfull power of the Lord vnto thoſe whom he feedeth. Men are afraide to profeſſe the goſpell, becauſe of the cruell perſecutors, and ſo

they

they doo account it a ſafetie to flie from Chriſt: the holy Church is contrarie, ſhee doth not ſeeke how ſhee may deale couertlie, and ſo auoide perill, but openly approacheth vnto Chriſt, knowing that hee can and will refreſh her, euen when the ſunne ſhineth hotteſt. Let vs then ſeeke with our mother, and cleaue to Chriſt, for hee hath a layer, at noone he will refreſh vs, and make vs in him to lie downe in peace, euen in the middeſt of the burning flames. All the holy Martyrs which ſuffered for the goſpell doo teſtifie this thing: why ſhould we then be affraide? Then touching the reaſon which ſhe addeth, that if hee doo not ſhew her where he feedeth, and alſo refreſh her in the heate, ſuch is her frailtie that ſhe ſhall decline and ioyne with falſe worſhippers: and ẏ would not bee to his honour, nor to her good. *Why* (ſaith ſhe) *ſhould I be as one that turneth aſide to the flocks of thy companions?* Or as it may well bee tranſlated, as one that pitcheth or ſpreadeth her tent by the flocks of thy companions. That the faithfull doo worſhip God aright in ſpirite and trueth, Iohn 4. and doo not ioyne with idolaters, they haue it not of themſelues, but from hence, that they bee all taught of God, Iohn 6. verſ. 45. But if ſhee ſpeake here of idolatrous flocks, vnto whom ſhee ſhall turne if Chriſt doo not teach her, then the Maſters of falſe worſhip are called the companions of Chriſt, is not that a

dignitie

dignitie ouer great for ſuch wicked men? For anſwer vnto this we muſt note that ſhe doth not call them, ſo giuing vnto them thereby any dignitie, but rather noting thereby what wicked vſurpers they be. For Chriſt is the onely maſter, the onely ſhepheard, the onely teacher of the true worſhip of God: and all ſuch as ſet vp a worſhip and a doctrine of their owne; aduaunce themſelues euen to be his companions. Such a companion is the Pope, for hee doth take vpon him to frame a religion, and ſtandeth to maintaine that it is of equall authoritie with the religion of Chriſt. But wee are taught heere to ſeeke vnto the Lorde Ieſus, that he may ſhew vnto vs where hee feedeth his flocke, that wee may ioyne with the ſame, and be fed by him, and ſo kept that wee decline not to the flocks of ſuch companions. The Lord giue vs that grace, Amen.

Let vs pray.

THE

THE SECOND SERMON.

CHAP. I.

8 *If thou know not, O thou faireſt among women, get thee forth by the ſteps of the flocke, and feede thy kids by the tents of the ſhepheards.*

9 *I haue compared thee my loue, vnto the troupe of horſes in the chariots of Pharaoh.*

10 *Thy cheeks are comely with rowes of ſtones, and thy neck with chaines.*

11 *We wil make thee borders of gold with ſtuds of ſiluer.*

12 *While the king was at his repaſte, my ſpikenard gaue the ſmell thereof.*

13 *My welbeloued is as a bundle of myrhe vnto me, he ſhall lodge betweene my breaſts.*

14 *My welbeloued is as a cluſter of Camphire vnto me in the vines of Engedie.*

15 *My loue, behold thou art faire, behold thou art faire, thine eyes are like the doues.*

16 *My welbeloued, behold thou art faire and pleaſant, alſo our bed is greene.*

17 *The*

17 *The beames of our house are Cedars, the rafters are of Firrh.*

THe speeches of the bride seeking after her welbeloued, are past in the former part of this chapter: and now we shal heare what the bridegrome sayth, for he answereth in foure verses, and then each doth commend the other by course. Her last request which she made vnto him was this, that *he would shew her where hee feedeth, and where he causeth the flock to lie downe at noone.* And vnto this hee doth frame his first speech in most kinde and louing maner thus. *If thou know not* (saith he) *O thou fairest among women.* The very forme of his speech doth seeme to import thus much: That it is a strange thing, that shee doth not know where he feedeth his flocke: for hath he not from the beginning fed his Church, so as the Church hath knowne how and where he hath fed her? Yes doubtles: but yet the false teachers haue oftentimes so preuailed, and haue so confidently chalenged to themselues the name and title of the true Church, and the true knowledge hath been oftentimes so darkened, that the poore sheep of Christ haue not knowne almost which way to turne them, being in danger of ioyning themselues to the flockes of those companions: but that they haue had their refuge in flying vnto Christ to bee taught the trueth by him.

him. Partly indeede (as it cannot bee denied) by negligẽce thoſe things come to paſſe: but Chriſt doth not vpbraid her with that, but doth verie readily inſtruct her, as we ſhall ſee in that which followeth. Then further that he calleth her, *the faireſt among women*, you may ſee how beautifull and comely ſhe is in his ſight. Howſoeuer ſhe ſeemeth in her owne eyes to be blacke (as all the faithful are priuie to their owne deformities) and howſoeuer others doe deſpiſe her while they doe eſteeme her to be voyd of beautie: yet vnto Chriſt ſhe is the fayreſt of all other. Great flocks there haue been in the world of ſundrie profeſſions, and goodly glorie and external ornaments they haue been decked withall: but their beauty in the eyes of the Lord, is nothing comparable to the beautie of his Spouſe, who is baſe in outward ſhew, but yet by her ſpirituall ornaments ſhe excelleth them all, ſo that he calleth her *the faireſt among women*. This is a wonderfull comfort vnto euery faithful ſoule, when the diuell in time of temptation ſhall ſuggeſt after this maner: Thou art ſpotted and defiled with many ſinnes and offences: thou art foule, thou art black, thou art deformed: how ſhould the moſt holie and glorious Lord Ieſus delight in thee? Conſider with thy ſelfe, what reaſon haſt thou to think that thou ſhalt bee married vnto him? Yea what ſhould perſwade thee, that he regardeth thy praiers? That ſweete voyce of Chriſt is this, *O thou faireſt among*

women.

women. What would we haue more? when wee are ſo full of deformities, yet faire in his eyes. But how then? is that which is black faire in the eyes of Chriſt? No verily, for he can approue nothing that is vncleane: but he beholdeth the beautie of his ſpouſe ſo farre as ſhe is regenerate and decked with vertues: and as for her blacknes and deformities, they ſhall bee wholly taken away. So he beholdeth her iuſtified and ſanctified in himſelf. And thus much touching his kinde ſpeech: and now let vs ſee what anſwer he maketh vnto her requeſt. She doth intreate him of all loue to ſhew her where hee feedeth his flocke, that ſhee may ioyne her ſelfe there to bee fed with them, vnder him and by him her onely ſhepheard. And marke what he biddeth her vnto, that ſhe may obtaine her deſire herein: *Go forth* (ſayth he) *by the ſteps of the flocke, and feede thy kids by the tents of the ſhepheards*. Is this the way to finde him where he feedeth, and where he cauſeth his flock to lie downe at noone? Is this a ſufficient anſwer to her requeſt? Yea doubtles, Chriſt anſwereth her deſire to the full: let vs therefore conſider the ſenſe of his words, for they inſtruct vs in a moſt waightie matter. Some doe tranſlate them thus, *Seeing thou knoweſt not, O thou faireſt among women, goe forth, ſtay not in the footſteps of the flocke, and feede thy kids aboue the tents of other ſheepherds*. As if he ſhould will her to come away from thoſe flocks of his companions, as ſhe

called

he called them, and not walke in their wayes: or albeit they in their blinde deuotion pretend to worship God, yet indeed they worship diuels. And seeing the doctrines and religions of those companions be from mans inuention, and so are of the earth here below, yea euen from the pit of hell, she must feede her kids aboue the tents of those other shepheards, she must leade them into the heauenly pastures. This is a goodly sense, but I doe not see how the words will beare it in this place. Indeede the preposition, *gnal*, signifieth differently, aboue, vpon, or beside, as to say aboue the tents, or beside the tents. But in the other words there is a very hard eclipse, when the words are plainlie set downe thus, *go forth in the steps of the flock*, to say, *go forth, stay not, or walke not in the steps of the flocke.* And moreouer we are to note, that in her vehement suit vnto Christ she would shewe her whete bee feedeth, since saith, *Why should I bee as one that turneth aside by the flockes of thy companions?* She saith not to the flock. The false worshippers be many flocks, and so she calleth them: for they differ in their religion each from other. If Christ then had spoken of these, he would haue called them flockes, as she did, and not a flocke. He would haue said, goe forth, walke not in the steps of those flockes which thou speakest of. The true Church indeed consisteth of many seuerall flocks, if wee respect the diuersitie of times and places: but if wee re-

ſpect the vnitie of their faith, and how they bee made one mysticall bodie of Christ, they bee all but one flocke. Againe, wee finde in the holie Scriptures, that hypocrites and counterfeit worshippers are called goates, yea they bee euen heards of swine, or rather of wolues, and such like cruell beasts: wee finde them not called sheepe, as the Lords people are called his sheepe. Now in this place the words doe stand thus; goe forth in the steps of the sheepe. I take it therefore verie cleere, that hee speaketh of the people of God, saying, *goe forth in the steps of the sheepe*. If thou wilt finde me where I doe feede my sheepe, that thou maist ioyne with me to become one flock, goe forth in their steps, and feede thy kids by the tents of the shepheards. Here is the way for all the faithfull to finde where the great shepheard of the sheepe our Lord Iesus feedeth his flocke: then let vs consider diligently of it, that wee may follow his direction. It is the Church which maketh her prayer, that hee would shew vnto her where he feedeth. What flocke doth he feede besides the Church? Is not shee his onely flocke? What other sheepe then are those whose steps she must trace to finde where he feedeth? Indeed the Church is but one, and Christ feedeth none other flocke besides her: but you must obserue, that this is the prayer of the Church euer vpon earth; *Shew me, O thou whom my soule loueth, where thou feedest*. And there bee which were

vpon earth in former times, which are gone out of the world. These are the sheepe in whose steps he willeth her to goe foorth: and by the steps of these she shall come to find where the holesome pasture is. The case standeth thus; there is but one true faith, one holy religion and worship of God, one pure doctrine, one spirituall foode or pasture for all that come to life. Although it hath not been deliuered at all times alike, or vnder one forme: for the Fathers vnder the Law had all vnder figures and shadowes, which the Gospell layeth open cleerely. Hereupon it followeth, that when there arise Sectmasters, Heretikes, and false teachers, which draw flockes of disciples after them, and each companie boasteth that they be the true Church, and now the faithfull in the middest of these confusions, crie out vnto Christ to shew them where he doth feede: his direction is this; goe forth in the steps of the sheepe, looke into the wayes of the ancient Churches, looke what doctrine and what religion they professed, looke what shepheards fed them, ioyne your selues to the tents of the same shepheards, and feede in the same pasture. Here then bee two things chiefly to be considered, which also must not bee parted asunder; the steps of the sheepe, and the tents of the shepheards: for there is a great controuersie betweene vs and the Romish Church. They call vs Schismatikes, and we stand to maintaine that they be the Synagogue of Antichrist,

tichriſt, the great whore of Babel, the mother of whoredomes and abominations of the earth, an idolatrous ſtrumpet. To the triall we come, they crie out for the ſteps of the ancient flockes, and the tents of the ancient ſhepheards that fed thē, and ſo doe we. Herein we doe conſent: but yet when we come to the point, we differ as farre as light and darknes. For whereas wee looke vnto the ſteps of Abraham, Izhak and Iaakob, and other holy men whom the Scripture commendeth, wee looke vnto the faith, the doctrine and the religion of Moſes and the Prophets, yea of the Apoſtles and Martyrs of Chriſt Ieſus, wee look how they worſhipped, and how they liued, as the ſacred hiſtories of the Bible doe ſet foorth vnto vs: for if the word of God did not teſtifie of them, how ſhould we know their ſteps to bee the ſteps of Chriſts flocke? Alſo wee looke who were the ſhepheards vnder Chriſt in ancient time, euen the Prophets and the Apoſtles, wee looke vnto their tents and by them we ſeeke for paſture. We looke onely vnto the written word which is deliuered vnto vs from God by thē: for their writings are as the ſhepheards tents erected, and there only is the holeſome foode: there be the greene paſtures, there we ioyne our ſelues vnto the true ſheepe of Chriſt: this is our courſe as Chriſt here willeth. The Papiſts will none of this: but they will let paſſe the ſteps of Abraham, Izhak and Iaakob, of the Patriarks and Prophets,

phets, of the Apoſtles and other holy men of whō the word of God beareth witneſſe: they will not allow that the writings of the Prophets and Apoſtles ſhall be the tents of theſe ſhepheards of whom Chriſt ſpeaketh: they hold not that to be the only holeſome paſture with which they feed Gods people. And they will haue men looke to the ſteps of certaine Popes, Cardinals, Monkes, Friers, and a deale of ſuch vermine, which for the ſpace of ſome fiue or ſixe hundreth yeares hath crawled vpon the earth. They ſend vs to the decrees of Popes and popiſh prelates, and to their owne conſtitutions, there wil they haue the tents of the ſhepheards to bee, and the holeſome paſtures. What a blindnes is it in all thoſe which cannot ſee that theſe bee very theeues and murtherers? For when Chriſt willeth vs to goe forth by the ſteps of the ſheepe, and to feede by the tents of the ſhepheards: what ſheepe, but thoſe whom hee hath giuen teſtimonie vnto by his word, that they were his faithfull worſhippers? Where ſhall we ſeeke the Church but in the holy ſcriptures of the Apoſtles and Prophets? When he ſpeaketh of the tents of the ſhepheards which fed and guided thoſe ancient flocks, whom ſhall we take then to be but only thoſe whom he hath declared to bee his ſeruants? euen the holie Apoſtles and Prophets? Then marke theſe popiſh ſeducers: They teach many ſtrange doctrines contrary to the doctrine of the Apoſtles and

Prophets, euen doctrines of diuels. They worship Idols, and haue a thousand superstitions: and when they should proue them, that men may come to ioyne with the ancient people of God, and to feede by the tents of those faithfull shepheards; they stand by the way side, and tell men that they will proue their doctrine and worship by the ancient shepheards and steps of the sheepe, and leade them vnto by-lanes vnto their owne companies, and there murther them. For they haue nothing to proue their doctrine and worship, but their owne authoritie. Such a Pope, so many Cardinals and Bishops did decree this and that, they cannot erre, therefore we must beleeue it. Here is all their proofe. But let vs leaue these wicked companions, and hearken againe what Christ sayth now further vnto his beloued Spouse.

VVe haue seene how vehement her desire is in seeking after him, and now he sheweth how much the same pleaseth him: for the commendation which he giueth vnto her, is drawne from thence. But see now vnder what comparison he praiseth her: *I haue likened thee my loue,* (sayth he) *vnto the troupe of horses which is in the chariots of Pharaoh. Thy cheekes are comely with rowes of stones, and thy necke with chaines.* A troupe of horses, being the horses also of a mightie king, and furnished for the warres, decked with rowes of precious stones vpon their cheeks,

as

the maner of the Egyptians and other coun-
es was, and chaines of gold about their necks,
as a very goodly sight: now vnto these he com-
reth his Spouse, with her spirituall decking and
naments, as it were rowes of goodly precious
ones and chaines. But further you must note,
at the troupe of horses in the chariots of Pha-
oh were strong, cheerefull, prompt and readie
the warre: and herein the Church is compa-
d vnto them. It may be sayd, is this holy virgin
a troupe of horses to the warre? or is she for
arre? Yea she is called the Church militant,
at is the Church warring. The enemies against
om she warreth are mightie: They be princi-
lities and powers, they bee the rulers of the
rknes of this world. Her warre is against al the
uels of hell: she seeketh vnto Christ, and hee
th armed her with spirituall armour to van-
iish them al. Vnto this battaile she is prepared,
e is adorned, she is prompt and readie, she is
ll of fortitude and valour, the troupe of horses
the chariots of king Pharaoh are not compa-
ble vnto her. They bee strong and swift, and
adie to the battaile, but they be but flesh. They
e decked and set forth with rowes of precious
ones vpon their cheekes, and with gold chaines
bout their neckes; these be things corruptible.
Her strength is spirituall, and against spirituall e-
emies: her ornaments which are likened vnto
owes of precious stones be also spirituall. And

she is commended for her fortitude, which hee hath armed her withal, euen that armour of God, as S. Paul calleth it, Ephes. 6. VVe see then, that all which long after the Lord Iesus, lose not their labour in seeking vnto him: for he decketh them with heauenly ornaments, maketh them valiant and strong in his owne power to fight, and to preuaile against the mightiest enemies, euen the diuels of hell. Let this stirre vs vp to seeke after him continually. He is our strength and fortitude he is our refuge and defence, through him, as S. Paul sayth, wee are more then conquerers. And vsing the graces and gifts well which he bestoweth vpon vs, wee shall receiue more: for marke what he promiseth in the words that follow. *We will make thee borders of gold with studs of siluer.* You see that these words are a promise, and indeede as it is manifest, a promise of further rich ornaments. She is richly decked alreadie, but her decking shall bee yet more. She shall haue the most excellent ornaments of gold and siluer, which wrought together do set forth each other. Indeede by these, the heauenly graces of the holy Ghost are signified. But who are they which shall make and put vpon her these goodly iewels? for he sayth not, I will make thee, but *we will make thee borders of gold with studs of siluer.* VVho are they whom the bridegrome here ioyneth with himselfe in this worke? Are they his friends, the holy Apostles and Prophets? Indeed they

they as instruments haue decked and beautified the Church, with the rich and costly ornaments which were deliuered vnto them for to put vpon her, and therefore it may after a sorte bee spoken of them. But more fully it is to be vnderstoode of the three persons in the glorious Trinitie, the Father, the Sonne, and the holy Ghost: for all these doo decke and beautifie the Church. The Father hath giuen his Sonne to be the Sauiour of the world, & with him, or rather in him, all good things. The Sonne hath wrought all righteousnes, and finished all things which concerne our redemption? And the holy Ghost maketh vs partakers of the same. Thus you see what a promise is made vnto the Church: she hath goodlie rich iewels bestowed vpon her, and more costly shee shall haue, euen vntill shee come to the full and perfect beautie, which she shall haue in the heauens. Let vs then take comfort in this promise, and set our hearts constantly and zealously to seeke the Lord, seeing it is a thing so pleasing in his sight, hast thou receiued spirituall decking in thy soule? Seeke Christ, and thou shalt haue more, for here is a promise.

Now the Church speaketh againe, setting forth by three comparisons the excellent sweetnes of Christ Iesus, her most louing spouse, namelie of *Spikenard, Camphyre and Myrhe*. But there is some hardnes in the first sentence of her speech, which is thus translated, *While the King was at his*

his repaſt, my Spikenard gaue the ſmell thereof. That which is tranſlated *his repaſte*, may be taken *his ſitting*: for the maner was in banquets to ſit round, and ſo the word is vſed more generally. The ſenſe may be taken two waies: for if we take it after our tranſlation, then ſhe ſpeaketh of the King with her in banquet here vpon earth: for Chriſt is ſaid to feaſt and banquet with the godly while they liue here. For thus he ſaith, *Behold I ſtand at the dore and knocke, if any heare my voyce and open, I will come in and ſuppe with him, and he with me*, Reuel. 3. verſ. 20. If wee take it thus, while the King is in his ſitting, that is, while he yet ſitteth in the heauens, then is there a ſecret compariſon to the ſetting forth of his wonderfull and vnſpeakeable ſweetnes. As if ſhee ſhould ſay, euen now while the King my welbeloued is ſitting in the heauens, compaſſed about with his holy Angels, and I heere vpon the earth below, there is a wonderfull diſtance betweene vs, and yet the ſweet ſauour of him commeth vnto me, yea, I doo ſmell his ſweetnes, euen as it were the precious Spikenard, Myrrhe and Camphyre. How great is his ſweetnes that commeth vnto mee, through this diſtance? How ſweete and delightſome ſhall hee bee vnto mee, when I ſhall dwell with him in the heauens? But it flatlie gaineſaieth this ſenſe which followeth, if wee take the words as they be in our engliſh tranſlation, namelie thus, my Spikenard gaue the ſmell

thereof.

reof. For then the Church commendeth her
vne ſweetenes, by ſaying, *my Spikenarde gaue*
e ſmell thereof. Doubtles ſhe praiſeth here the
eetenes of Chriſt, and therefore ſeeing the
ords doo indifferently beare it, becauſe the let-
which is the affixe ſometime formeth the ad-
tiue, I take it to be the righter way to tranſlate
thus, *That which is of Spikenard gaue the*
ell thereof. For as I ſaid by *Spikenard, Murrhe*
d Camphyre, ſhee ſetteth forth how ſweete
riſt is vnto her. In the next verſe ſhee likeneth
n vnto a *budde of Myrrhe*, and ſaith *that he*
ll remaine betweene her breaſts. In our ſpeech
undle is of ſome waight: but the word which
here vſed, ſignifieth not onely ſuch a bundle,
t alſo any little bunch of flowers or ſweetes
at are bounde together. Shee compareth him
erefore vnto a bunch of Myrrhe, or noſegay
s we cal it) ſuch as they vſe to make of the ſwee-
ſt flowers, which the maidens did ſet in their
oſomes betweene their breaſts, and ſo they haue
e ſweete ſauour alwaies in their noſe. So this
oly virgin the ſpouſe of Chriſt, feeling her wel-
eloued to be ſo ſweete vnto her, ſaith, that he is
s a bunch of ſweete Myrrhe, and that ſhee will
et him in her boſome, euen betweene her breaſts,
nd there he ſhall remaine, that ſhe may alwaies
mell his ſweetnes. In the third place ſhe ſaith,
he is to her, as a cluſter of Camphyre or of Cyprus,
a very ſweete thing: and euen as the ſweeteſt of

that

that kinde, which grew in the vines of Enged
Is Christ Iesus as the bride here saith of him ?
he so repleniſhed with ſweetenes, that euen fro
the high heauens he perfumeth the whole wo
with moſt excellent ſweete ſmell? How is it th
that the ſpouſe ſaith it is vnto her? Doo no
ſmell this ſweetenes but ſhee ? Doubtles t
Church onely hath the right ſenſe how swee
the Lord is. She, euen all the elect, the redeeme
and ſanctified in Christ, doo feele the free remi
ſion of ſinnes, and reconciliation to God, fro
whence ariſeth a ſweete peace and ſpirituall io
Through faith ſhe apprehendeth him who is h
ſanctifier, he is fixed in her heart, euen in her bre
and ſo hee maketh her continually to feele h
ſweete ſauour. The children of this world do
ſmell the ſweete ſauour of many earthly thing
and doo very much delight therein : but th
ſweetnes of Christ they doo not ſmell. This is n
meruaile: for let the ſunne ſhine neuer ſo bright
yet hee that is blinde perceiueth it not. And le
him that is without the ſenſe of ſmelling come a
mong ſweete ſauours, yet hee feeleth nothing
The Lorde Ieſus is preached, and as it were the
boxe of precious oyntment powred forth into
the worlde, ſo that the whole ayre is as it were
perfumed with his ſweete ſauour: but many are
ſo ſtuffed with euill ſauours, euen with the ſtink-
ing ſauours of carnall luſtes, which yet ſeeme
moſt delightſome vnto them, as that they can-

not

ſmell any ſpirituall ſweetenes. When the
hfull are euen rauiſhed in minde with the ſa-
ur of him that commeth vnto them, thoſe o-
r are nothing moued. They ſauour the things
ich are of the fleſh, and not the things which
of God. Here is a place then, by which euery
e of vs may trie himſelfe, whether we be in the
nt way or not. You ſee plainely what the mo-
r of all Gods children ſaith, how ſweet Chriſt
nto her, and how her heart is euen ſet vpon
n, ſhe fixeth him in her breaſt, that ſhee may
ntinually be refreſhed with his ſweetenes: this
ne ſtate of euery true Chriſtian ſoule. Then if
heart bee ſet vpon the cares and pleaſures of
s world, if thou bee earthlie minded, bewaile
ne eſtate, for what ſhall it auaile thee to boaſt
Chriſtianitie when thou ſhalt be found to be
a counterfeit Chriſtian? But if thou findeſt,
t being ſtincking and loathſome in thy ſelfe,
d that the Lord Ieſus doth perfume thee with
ſweetenes, ſo that thy heart for loue of him de-
iſeth vncleane luſts and carnall pleaſures, aſpi-
g vnto the heauens where thy treaſure and thy
y is, then art thou moſt happie: it is with thee
s the holy ſpouſe heere ſpeaketh. And knowe
is, that if thou wilt fixe Chriſt, euen as it were a
unch of ſweete Myrrhe in thy breaſt, thou haſt
one other way to doo it, but *by meditation in the holy word of God day and night*, Pſalme 1.
For why is it that Dauid ſaith of the holy word of

God,

that *it is more to be desired then golde, yea, the much fine golde, sweeter then the honey or the hony combe*, Psal. 19. But that through the word felt all the sweetenes from Christ, deriued vn him. The words in themselues can be but wor and not so rich nor so sweete; but as they be conduit pipes, or as it were, certaine vessels or i strumentes, by which the heauenly riches are co ueyed into our hearts, they be more to be desi then golde, and sweeter then honey. We appr hend Christ Iesus, and are ingrafted into hi through a true and liuely faith. *That faith* (t the holy Apostle teacheth) *commeth by hearin and hearing by the word of God*, Rom. 10. It not then possible for these men to feele any swe smell of Christ Iesus our blessed Lorde, whi feele no sweetenes in the liuely oracles of Go They may haue certaine fantasies and imagina ons; but as for any power of Christ, for mortifi cation of sinne, or for quickening vnto vertue there is none at all. They be not perfumed, Chri is not vnto them as a cluster of Camphyre, o as a bunch of Myrrhe in their bosome; neithe doth his sweetenes come vnto them, as Spike nard. Let vs, beloued, be carefull to differ from such, by feeling that which the bride saith here.

In the next words, the bridegrome speaketh againe, commending and praising, and that very highly, the beautie of his bride. *Behold thou art faire my loue*, (sayth he) *behold thou art faire,*

thine

hine eyes are as the doues. It is the whole desire
f the Church to bee welfauoured, comely, and
eautifull in the eyes of Christ. If hee accept of
er it is all in all, what can she desire more? A
ngular ioy it must needes bee then vnto her, to
nderstand for certaintie that she is beautifull
deed in his sight. And therefore the Lord to
heere her, dooth pronounce in maner as you
ue heard, that shee is faire. And now for the
aner of his speech, he sayth, *beholde thou art*
ire. The Scripture vseth this word *behold*, when
will stirre vp the mindes of men to consider
me rare, some excellent or wonderfull matter.
s, *Behold a virgin shall be with childe*, &c. *Be-*
old the day of the Lord shall come, &c. So then
y this maner of speech Christ here declareth,
at the Church his spouse is exceeding beauti-
l in his sight. Then further, to amplifie the mat-
r, see how he doubleth his speech, saying, *Be-*
old thou art faire, my loue, behold thou art faire.
his is to shew that her beautie indeed doth ex-
ell: for it doth expresse a vehemencie of minde
hen the speech is so doubled. If we speake of a
nan which we take to be starke naught, we dee
ot, if wee vtter our minde to any, satisfie our
elues by saying, he is naught: but wee will say,
e is naught, he is naught. And so by doubling
he speech, we would haue knowne that we take
im to be exceeding naught, euen such as we can
hardly expresse with words. In like maner, when

we

we wil expresse the rare excellencie of any thin
we vse to say, it is excellent, it is excellent. Eu
so our Lord Iesus Christ saith here to his Chur
Behold thou art faire, my loue, behold thou
faire: declaring thereby that shee is not on
faire, but wonderfull faire and glorious in
sight. Let the world iudge of her how they wi
esteeming her as base & deformed (for the wo
cannot behold the spiritual beautie and heaue
ly ornaments) yet she is precious and goodly b
fore the Lord. Wee may triumph in this, euen
many as vnfainedly loue the Lord Iesus: that w
are so comely and pleasing in his eyes. But
may bee sayd, Is there not a lumpe of sinne? A
there not many foule spots and deformities
the most faithfull soules while they liue here?
that which is polluted and defiled with sinn
beautifull and comely in the eyes of the Lord
sus? Can anything be so faire vnto him which
full of blemishes? To this I answer, as before
answered, that the Lord Iesus beholdeth the ve
tues and comely graces wherewith his belou
Spouse is decked: he doth not regard her spo
and deformities, *because he will wash them all*
way, and make her a glorious Church to himse
not hauing spot or wrinckle. Ephes. 5. What ma
more encourage vs thē this, to come vnto Chri
The diuell will tell thee this: what doest tho
seeking after Christ? hee is high, beautifull a
glorious, he is most holy and pure. Thou doe
bu

ut loſe thy labour, he will not regard thee which
rt ſinfull, ſpotted, and deformed. Wouldeſt thou
ee ioyned vnto him? Ceaſe from calling vpon
im, vnles thou mighteſt be better welcome vn-
o him. To repell all ſuch temptations of the ene-
nie, remember what the Lord ſaith here vnto his
Church, *Behold thou art faire, my loue, behold*
hou art faire. For looke what he ſpeaketh to the
hole Church, hee ſpeaketh vnto euery faithfull
ule. Is there faith, is there repentance, is there
ue loue, zeale, humilitie & meeknes? Although
here bee remnants of corruption, and a mixture
f diuers infirmities, yet this is not taken away,
ehold thou art faire, my loue, behold thou art
ire. Finde out then thoſe ornaments in thy ſelf,
nd though they be not perfect or full, yet be ſure
ey be in trueth, and come boldly vnto him ſo
uing a Sauiour, and reioyce in his loue.

That clauſe which followeth, doth yet further
toll her beautie, when he ſaith, *thine eyes are*
ke the doues. The chiefe beautie is in the face: for
et there be neuer ſo good ſhape and proportiõ,
there be not a welfauoured face, all is loſt. A-
aine, in the face the eye is very much either for
eautie or deformitie. Now the Doue hath a
oodly eye, and therefore in great commenda-
ion of his ſpouſe, Chriſt ſaith, *that her eyes are*
ike doues eyes. Furthermore, the eye of the doue
is ſimple and chaſte: and therefore in this com-
pariſon Chriſt doth beſides the beautie, ſet foorth

alſo the chaſte ſimplicitie of his Spouſe. The cha
ſtitie of virgins is much to be commended, and
thing requiſite for all Chriſtians to poſſeſſe the
veſſell in holines. This I ſpeake of the bodil
chaſtitie. But there is alſo a ſpirituall chaſtitie, i
which the Church is ſaid to be a chaſte and pur
virgin vnto Chriſt: as there is a ſpirituall whore
dome often complained of and condemned i
the Scriptures. Then as in marriage the bride
grome doth much delight in the chaſtitie an
ſimplicitie of his bride: ſo the faithfull ſoule, be
ing married vnto Chriſt, there is chaſtitie requi
red. She may not follow after others, or commi
whoredome with them: but ſhe muſt keepe her
loue, her faith, and her affection whole and en
tire towards him alone. They that imbrace the
doctrines and religions of men, worſhipping
ſtockes and ſtones, yea diuels, haue not doues
eyes, they be not chaſte, but doe commit abomi-
nable whoredome, as the word of God dooth
charge them. *Such as imbrace this world, be cal-
led adulterers and adultereſſes*, Iam 4. ver. 4. then
their eyes bee not as the eyes of the doue. They
make riches their god: for they haue ſet their
heart vpon them. And therefore Saint Paul ſaith,
that *couetouſnes is idolatrie*. Col. 3. verſ. 5. He then
that will bee beautifull in the ſight of the Lord,
muſt haue doues eyes: hee muſt with the ſingle
eye of faith worſhip him in ſpirit and truth, euen
as he preſcribeth in his holy word: he muſt loue

him

m and ſtay vpon him, and not vpon riches. What then are the eyes of the Church? That in eede may bee demaunded. *The eye* (as our Sa- our teacheth, Matth. 6.) *is the light of the body.* nd without the eye there is nothing but dark- es in the bodie. The eye then of the ſoule is the ght of the ſoule, and that is a true & liuely faith. Where faith is not, there is nothing but darkne-, d by faith we behold God. But *without faith* s it is written, Heb. 11.) *it is vnpoſſible to pleaſe od.* The delight then which our Lord God ta- th in his ſeruants, is in the beautie of this eye of ith. Let vs then labour daily for increaſe of the lie faith, that we may be more and more beau- full: for the beautie thereof ſhall neuer decay. hus wee ſee how the bridegrome hath praiſed s bride, and now ſhe rendreth the like to him. *ehold thou art faire, my welbeloued, and plea- nt, alſo our bed is greene.* It is very true that the ide is faire, he telleth ſo which cannot lie: but he reſteth not in her own beautie, which neither he hath of her ſelfe, neither yet is it the greateſt. or firſt of all this is cleere, that ſhe hath all her eautie and ornaments from him, it is hee that *aſheth her and maketh her glorious.* Epheſ. 5. Again, though the beauty & glory of the heauē- y nwe Ieruſalem be exceeding great, as it is ſet forth Reuel 21. yet the glorie of the bridegrome exceedeth it farre: for he is the fountaine of all glorie and beautie. And therefore ſhe returneth

this praiſe vpon him, that he indeede is faire and comely. Who can ſet forth the glorie of Chriſt? who can deſcribe his beautie and comelines? There is in him, or as S. Paul ſayth, *there dwelleth in him all fulnes of the Godhead bodily.* Coloſ. 2. verſ. 9. All the faithfull, euen the ſanctified, doe glorie in their beautie: but yet ſo, as *they know that they haue all from him, and ſo indeede they glorie only in him,* 1. Cor. 1. verſ. 31. *Behold thou art faire my welbeloued, and comely.* Vnto this fountaine then, who is made vnto vs of God, wiſedome, righteouſnes, ſanctification and redemption, wee are to haue recourſe. This moſt glorious beautie of the Lord is not ſeene nor felt of any but the faithfull. The world hath no benefit thereby, and therefore the world hath no ioy nor delight to praiſe him. Were it not for the moſt excellent beautie of Chriſt, the Church had been in euill caſe. Then ſhe addeth, *alſo our bed is greene.* She is a virgin, and yet ſhe is the mother of all Gods children: for *Ieruſalem from aboue* (ſayth Paul) *is free, which is the mother of vs all.* Galath. 4. verſ. 26. So many as haue God their father, haue the Church their mother. Whē ſhe ſaith then, *our bed is greene,* ſhe ſpeaketh of procreation in that heauenly and ſpirituall birth. The greenneſſe doth ſignifie floriſhing & freſh ſpringing of thoſe goodly plants which are borne of God. I need not ſtand here to handle this doctrine of regeneration, how the elect are begot-

ten

ten of God in the new birth by the immortall ſeede, euen by the word of trueth: and that this birth is in Chriſt, for wee often deale in thoſe points. Therefore, a word or two of that which remaineth.

The beames of our houſe are Cedars, the rafters are of firrhe. Whether this bee the ſpeech of the bride alone, as it may ſeeme, or whether it be vttered by them both, it is not much materiall to be ſtood vpon. Here is commended their houſe which they dwell in: and the commendation is from the matter which it is built of, euen Cedars and Firrhe. Theſe kinds of wood are durable, and commodious otherwiſe. That worde which is tranſlated rafters, is rather to bee taken for galleries, or goodly walkes which were wont to bee vpon the tops of kings palaces. But, what is this palace? Is it to be taken for the heauens, in which they ſhall for euer dwell together? I ſuppoſe rather that it is meant of an houſe while ſhe is yet in the world. What houſe then? Surely the Church her ſelfe, is the temple of the liuing God. Euery faithfull ſoule is the habitation of Chriſt. And therefore the holy Prophet in the Pſalme, calleth vpon men to open the doores of their heart to receiue in Chriſt: *Lift vp your heads ye gates, and be ye lift vp ye euerlaſting doores, and the king of glorie ſhall come in.* Pſal. 24. And thus wee haue had, as I may ſay, one ſong, betweene theſe Louers. Let vs pray.

THE THIRD SERMON.

Chap. II.

1 *I am the roſe of the field, and the lillie of the valleys.*

2 *Like a lillie among the thornes, ſo is my loue among the daughters.*

3 *Like the apple tree among the trees of the forreſt, ſo is my welbeloued among the ſonnes: vnder his ſhadow I had delight, and ſate downe, and his fruit was ſweet vnto my mouth.*

4 *He brought me into the houſe of wine, and loue was his banner ouer me.*

5 *Stay me with flagons, and comfort me with apples, for I am ſicke of loue.*

6 *His left hand is vnder my head, & his right hand doth imbrace me.*

7 *I charge you, O daughters of Ieruſalem, by the roes and by the hindes of the field, that ye ſtir not vp nor wake my loue, vntill ſhe pleaſe.*

IF this be called the Song of Songs, not onely for the excellencie, but alſo as ſome ſuppoſe it may,

may, becauſe it doth containe in it diuers Songs: then haue wee finiſhed one Song in the former chapter, and here wee haue another in this chapter. The bride did begin the former, and now let vs ſee which of them doth begin this ſong. The Pronoun (*ani*) which ſignifieth in our tongue, *I*, is common both to man and woman, as I man, or I woman, ſo that it cannot bee decided by the forme of ſpeech whether of them ſaith, *I am the roſe of Sharon, and the lillie of the valleys.* Moreouer, the Lord Ieſus and his Church are both of them ſweete, faire, comely, and beautifull, yea ſo ſweete and ſo exceeding beautifull, that all the ſweeteſt roſes and whiteſt lillies in the worlde are not comparable vnto them. If he bee called the roſe, and the lillie, it is moſt true he is ſo. And if the Church be likened vnto thē, it is a fit compariſon. Can it not then (may ſome man ſay) be gathered which of them ſpeaketh this? Yes verily, it is out of doubt that Chriſt ſpeaketh this of himſelfe, ſaying, *I am the roſe of Sharon, and the lillie of the valleys.* He doth in this ſet foorth his owne praiſe. The Church doth not ſpeake it: for then ſhee ſhould praiſe her ſelfe, which is not meete. If you will ſay, may not the Church praiſe her ſelfe? how then dooth Chriſt praiſe himſelfe? This is eaſily anſwered: Chriſt Ieſus is the fountaine of all goodnes, hee is worthie all praiſe, and may rightly praiſe himſelfe, as hee doth in the Goſpell ſay, that *he is the bread of*

life, and he is the light of the world. The Church hath all her holines and beautie from Christ, she may not praise her selfe, *No man is to praise himselfe*, Prou. 27. vers. 2. If any man shall replie, that the Church did in the former chapter praise her selfe, saying, *that she is blacke, but yet comely, &c.* I answer, that she was forced thereunto, least by those that take occasion to depraue her, the weak might stumble and be made to despise her. Saint Paul (as you know) was constrained to praise himselfe, least his doctrine should bee defaced, 1. Cor. 11. The false Apostles which sought all occasions to discredit him, did force him thereunto: and he saith, *that he dealt therein after the maner of fooles.* Then wee may see, that as the bride began the former Song, setting forth the excellencie of her bridegrome, and her desire to be with him, as the author and very fountaine of all her ioy and happines: so here the bridegrome beginneth, first praising himselfe, and then hee commendeth his dearly beloued spouse. Here bee a couple praised, euen a bridegrome and his bride, both of them excellent, faire, sweet, goodly and pure. Yea, they resemble each the other: for he is as the lillie, and she is so likewise. But he is praised first, because he is the very fountaine, all fulnes of sweete things is in him: and from him she receiueth all her goodnes, beautie and puritie. Without him, what are all the children of Adam? Are not all defiled? Are not all corrupt

rupt and abominable? Yea doe not all lie vnder ſinne, euen ouerwhelmed in the ſtinking mud of vncleannes? Then that the Church is a lillie, ſhe hath it from him, who ſaith, *I am the lillie of the valleys*. And marke how the Lord is ſet forth vnto vs by two goodly flowers, *the roſe*, and *the lillie*. They be ſweet, and they be beautifull: *Salomon in all his royaltie not like them*. Matth. 6. So our Lord is holie, he is pure, he is innocent, he is full of all beautie and glorie. And it is to be noted, that he compareth himſelfe to the goodlieſt roſe and the ſweeteſt, and to the faireſt lillie: for hee ſaith, *I am the roſe of Sharon*, which was a goodly fruitfull place mentioned in diuers places of the Scripture, in which as it appeareth by this place, the roſe did excell: and the lillie of the valleys, is the faireſt. Behold here what a Sauiour we haue to come vnto: how comfortable and delightſome is he, how ſoft and gentle? How is he to bee coueted, to be loued, and imbraced? And why doth he publiſh this praiſe of himſelfe, but to draw vs vnto him? Why are wee ſo dull hearted, and ſo negligent in ſeeking to be ioyned vnto him? What is there vnder the Sunne, that ſhould ſtay vs from ſuch a Sauiour? Lord make vs to behold thy glorious beautie, and to ſmell this ſweete ſauour, that wee may come vnto thee.

Let vs come to the next verſe: *Like a lillie among the thornes, ſo is my loue among the daughters.*

ters. This praise the Lord giueth of his Church: but as I said before, that she is as the faire, sweete and soft lillie, she hath it from him. *Of his fulnes we all receiue, euen grace for grace*, Iohn 1. And therefore when he had said, I am the lillie of the vallies, hee addeth by and by, that his loue is as the lillie. Shee is made righteous in him, shee is clothed with his innocencie and obedience: she is made faire and beautifull in him. But we must obserue how he setteth her forth, here by a comparison which consisteth of foure *termini*, as they call them, the *lillie*, the *thornes*, his *loue and the daughters*. The sense may be taken two waies: as first some haue taken it that hee setteth forth the state and condition of the Church, in which she is here in the world touching afflictions. As to say, like the soft lillie which groweth among the thornes, is pricked of them: so my spouse, my loue is pricked, and afflicted of the daughters among whom shee dwelleth. This is a true doctrine, for there be sundrie assemblies of diuers religions in the world, & euery one doth chalenge to be the true Church, and so all take vpon them to be the daughters of the most high, and so the title is giuen vnto them, though they be not so in deede. All these doo hate and persecute the true Church, and are euen like thornes in her side. Thus I say some haue expounded this place, and it is true, but not the sense of this place. It is not the meaning of Christ here to shew the affliction

of

of his Spouse, or the hard condition that she is in, but to magnifie her excellent beautie. For the comparison is made thus: The Churches of Idolaters make a goodly externall shew, and there seemeth to be a great pompe and glorie, so that to themselues they seeme to bee beautifull and goodly: but my loue excelleth them, as farre as the sweete white lillie excelleth the thornes. So that this worde *among* is taken in comparison. Set a lillie in comparison among briars and thornes, and see how it doth excell them: so doth the true Church excel all assemblies of worshippers in the world. She is base and despised in the eyes of the world, as hauing no ornaments: but in the eyes of the Lord is she full of spirituall beautie, and decked with heauenly iewels. Contrariwise, those counterfait daughters bee very gorgeous and trimme to the outward eye, they be very pompous and shining in the flesh: but in the eyes of the Lord they be but as thornes. Behold here the difference. Precious in the eyes of the Lord is his holy Church: but all other assemblies are but as thornes, meete for the fire. The bride hearing this commendation giuen of her by her bridegrome, breaketh forth into his praise, which she doth also set foorth by a comparison, saying, *As the apple tree among the trees of the forrest, so is my welbeloued among the sonnes.* As he set her forth in praise, that she excelleth all the daughters, as far as the lillie excelleth the thorns:

so she commendeth him, that he in dignitie surmounteth all the sonnes, as farre as the apple tree goeth beyond the common trees of the forrest. It may be demaunded, who are those sonnes with whom Christ is compared? Take them whom you will among all creatures in heauen & earth, he farre excelleth them all. *The Angels are great and glorious, but he is greater.* Hebr. 1. *He is farre aboue all principalitie, and power, and might, and domination, and euery name that is named, not onely in this world, but in that which is to come.* Ephes. 1. Right well therefore doth the Church compare him to excell all other, as farre as the apple tree excelleth the common trees of the forrest. And now marke how she prosecuteth this allegorie, shewing what worthie benefits she receiueth from this goodly apple tree. She includeth them all vnder two, his shadow, and his fruite. *Vnder his shadow* (sayth she) *I had delight, and sate downe, and his fruit was sweet vnto my mouth.* The shadowe of a tree (as all men know) is comfortable, and doth refresh those that are parched with ỹ boyling heat of the Sun. The Church is vnder hot persecutions: there be also firie temptations of the diuell, and burning heat of guiltines for sinne in the consciences of all the elect, vntill they be refreshed by Christ. Wherefore he sayth, *Come vnto me al ye that trauell and be heauie laden, and I will refresh you,* Matth. 11. Vnder his shadow she taketh delight: in him

she

ſhe findeth reſt and peace, and therefore ſhe ſitteth downe and remaineth vnder his ſhadow. A matter worthie to bee noted, how the faithfull hauing found the Lord Ieſus, and being comforted and refreſhed by him, do hold themſelues cloſe vnder his ſhadow, they make their abode there, and ſeeke no further. They finde that in him there is a full ſufficiencie to refreſh them in perſecution, and to quench and coole all the heat of their ſinnes. Farre otherwiſe it is with Idolaters, and ſuch as worſhip falſe gods. When they haue done al that they can, they are not ſatisfied, they finde no eaſe, nor no way to take away the ſting of coſcience. *They multiplie their ſorowes*, as the prophet ſayth, Pſal. 16. They doe puniſh and afflict themſelues many waies, ſeeking all meanes to make ſome ſatisfaction for their ſins, to coole the burning heate of their guiltie conſcience: but when they haue wearied themſelues, they can finde no eaſe nor no reſt, for that is onely to bee found vnder the ſhadow of this apple tree, where the holy ſpouſe taketh her delight and is ſet downe. Shall wee not then ſit downe onely vnder the ſhadow of Chriſt? And then ſhe ſaith, *that his fruite is ſweet vnto her mouth*. She doth not from this fruitfull tree receiue onely the comfortable refreſhing ſhadow, but alſo eateth of the apples which he beareth: and the ſame (as ſhe affirmeth) are ſweet and pleaſant to her taſte. What theſe apples are, I need not ſtand to ſhew:

the

the faithful ſoule feedeth vpon Chriſt, and is nouriſhed with all heauenly foode, euen the fruites which he beareth. And what is wanting in him? *He is made vnto vs of God* (as S. Paul ſaith) *wiſedome, righteouſnes, ſanctification and redemptiõ*, 1. Cor. 1. The holy Church is by him alone fullie ſatisfied with all good things, which ſhe dooth here declare not onely by this allegorie of an apple tree, but alſo by a banquet: for ſhe addeth, *The king brought me into the banquetting houſe, and loue was his banner ouer me.* It is in our engliſh tranſlation, the king brought mee into the wine celler. The word in the Hebrew text is, the houſe of wine. To take this houſe of wine for a wine celler, is not fit: for is it not the order, not comely that a king ſhould leade his ſpouſe into a wine celler; nay, the houſe of wine is that which we call a banquetting houſe. The great kings, and noble princes of this world, doe vſe to entertaine one another in ſumptuous and royall banquetting houſes, in which they doe ſet before them all the daintie things which can bee gotten for money. This moſt high and glorious king of all kings, bringeth his Loue, his Queene, his deare Spouſe, into his banquetting houſe, which doth excell all the banquetting houſes of earthly kings. The coſtly things which they do banquet withall, are but traſh and droſſe, and beggarly ſcraps, in compariſon of thoſe heauenly dainties with which hee dooth entertaine his

ſpouſe.

ſpouſe. Heere is therefore a moſt rich and precious banquet mentioned. Here is that which is written, *The kingdome of heauen is like to a King that married his ſonne*, Matth. 22. *Happie and bleſſed are all they, which are called to this ſupper*, Reuel. 19. verſ. 9. But it may bee ſaid, how commeth ſhe into this houſe of wine? And how doth ſhee taſte of theſe heauenly dainties? You muſt marke how ſhee ſaith, that the King brought her into the houſe of wine. None can enter in thether, except the Lord Ieſus by his ſpirite doo leade them in. *No man* (ſaith he) *commeth vnto me, except the father that ſent me doo draw him*, Iohn 6. We cannot be partakers of the heauenly treaſures which are in Chriſt, but through the operation of the holy Ghoſt, as Saint Paul teacheth at large, 1. Cor. 2. And the Church doth taſte of this banquet ſpirituallie through faith. She doth ſo feede vpon Chriſt crucified, eating his fleſh, and drinking his blood. What good thing then doth ſhe want? Is not all fulnes in Chriſt? We neede not doubt, but that here is righteouſnes, here is life, here is peace, here is ioy, euen vnſpeakeable and glorious, as the holy Apoſtle Saint Peter ſpeaketh, 1. Pet. 1. verſ. 8. And it is a moſt ſpecial matter which ſhe addeth, ſaying, *And loue was his banner ouer me.* It is the vſe and maner in the warres, that an enſigne, or banner is ſpread and diſplayed: and ſo the bands and companies of ſouldiers are aſſembled

and

and gathered together, each company vnto their own colours. The Church vpon earth is a Church militant, and hath a great Captaine, a mightie Emperour, vnder whose conduct she doth warre and fight the good fight of faith. His banner is displayed, euen to assemble and gather together vnto him all his bands and companies. And this banner (as she sayth) which is thus spread ouer her, is loue. All the faithfull, euen all the chosen of God, are drawne vnto Christ by his loue. What loue is like vnto his, *who hath giuen himselfe to death for vs when we were his enemies?* Rom. 5. *Who hath washed vs in his blood*, Reuel. 1. And what is the true and liuely faith, which bringeth men vnto God, but euen to apprehend his fauour, and to know that he hath loued vs, & giuen his owne sonne, euen by his precious death and blood-sheading, to worke our redemption? All men will confesse that this was a singular loue in Christ: but yet euery man is not drawne thereby to loue againe with the true loue, of which hee himselfe doth speake in the Gospel, saying, *If any man loue me, he will keepe my word.* Iohn 14.23. And in the same chapter he sayth, *He that hath my commandements and keepeth them, is he that loueth me*: but onely they which feele that the same loue of Christ reacheth vnto themselues. For the loue of Christ is the ensigne spread, by which he draweth all his chosen vnto him: and no one is drawne, but they onely ouer whom the

same

ſame enſigne is diſplaied. For marke this how ſhe ſaith, *Loue was his banner ouer me.* The loue of Chriſt is preached, and ſo the banner is after a ſort diſplaied ouer all that do heare what he hath done for mankinde: notwithſtanding no man is drawne, ſauing ſuch as are aſſured that hee hath loued them: for loue is his banner ouer them. They haue the full aſſurance of faith, that he ſuffered death to make ſatisfaction for their ſinnes, that in him they are iuſtified and ſanctified, and ſhall be glorified. *His ſpirit doth witnes together with their ſpirit, that they bee the ſonnes of God.* Rom. 8. Theſe do indeed loue him againe: theſe are enflamed with a moſt vehement deſire to come vnto him, and they ioy and delight in him continually. Yea I may ſay rightly, that there are not any which doe worſhip and ſerue the Lord with any acceptable ſeruice or worſhip, but only thoſe ouer whom the banner of his loue is ſpread. For vndoubtedly, that which proceedeth not of loue, is but as a dutie which is forced, it cõmeth not in his right kinde, it is wrought for ſome ſiniſter reſpects, or wrung forth by a ſeruile feare. *Without faith* (ſaith the holy Ghoſt, Hebr. 11.) *it is vnpoſſible to pleaſe God.* What is the reaſon of that? The reaſon is manifeſt, that vntill a man by faith do finde and know that the Lord loueth him, he cannot loue God. *We loue him* (ſaith S. Iohn) *becauſe he loued vs firſt.* 1. Ioh. 4. And not louing God, he cannot offer any thing vnto him

which is acceptable and pleasing in his sight. The Lord God is delighted only with that which proceedeth from a franke heart which sincerely loueth him. And (as S. Paul saith, Galat. 4.) *faith worketh by charitie.* Behold then, the fountaine of all holy duties in man towards his Lord God, euen loue, and the same wrought by the banner of his loue spread ouer vs, as the holy spouse here speaketh. Vntill wee doe behold this banner in deede displaied ouer vs, wee lie vtterly as dead blockes, touching any holy action. A man may force his hands, his feete, his tongue, yea euen his minde also vnto the doing of such things as are required: but all is nothing, vntill the loue of Christ constraine vs. When that banner is spread ouer vs, then are we drawne, then we run. *Simon Ioanna, loueſt thou me? feed my ſheep, Loueſt thou me? feed my lambs.* Ioh 21. And look what Paul did, he saith, *the loue of Christ constraineth vs.* 2. Cor. 5. 14. And we reade of the woman in the Gospel, which washed the feet of the Lord with teares, & wiped them with the hairs of her head. From whence proceeded al this? Was it not frō hence, as Christ saith, that she loued much? And why did she loue much? He also sheweth, when he saith: *for many sinnes are forgiuen her.* She had felt the banner of his loue spread ouer her, in forgiuing her many sinnes, and this did draw her to loue him exceedingly. Then may wee learne from this speech of the Church, what is the chief

durie of the miniſters of the Goſpell, namely, to ſpread this banner of his loue vnto the people: yea euen to publiſh and lay open the riches of his loue towards mankinde, in offering himſelfe to be a ranſome for the ſins of the world, to draw men out of eternall miſerie, vnto a moſt happie and bleſſed life. And then if you will loue the Lord Ieſus indeede, ſeeke to apprehend his loue. Euery man that taketh a wife and a right courſe, muſt come vnto this with the holy ſpouſe, *Loue was his banner ouer me.* For if Chriſt by faith doe leade him into the banquetting houſe, euen to make him taſte of all thoſe heauenly dainties which be in himſelf, ſo that he feele that through his croſſe his ſinnes are defaced, he is made righteous and innocent, hee is deliuered from the tyrannie of the diuell, from death and endles miſerie, and made heire of euerlaſting glorie: then doth he make him behold the banner of his loue ſpread ouer him: and then is the heart of that man ſet on fire with a burning loue towards the Lord Ieſus Chriſt: he ſeeketh after him, as after his chiefe treaſure and hearts ſolace: he delighteth to heare his voyce: he taketh pleaſure in his commandements: hee doth all his endeuour to ſet forth his glorie and praiſe: yea al fruits of loue doe follow, euen of a moſt earneſt loue. But that will appeare more by the next words, in which ſhe crieth out, *Stay me with flagons, and comfort me with apples: for I am ſicke of loue.*

Beholde here a wonderfull effect of those former things which she spake of. Shee compared Christ vnto an appletree, vnder whose shadow she tooke delight and sate downe, and his fruite was sweete vnto her mouth. *He brought her* (as she saith) *into the house of wine, and loue was his banner ouer her.* Hereupon her hart is so rauished with loue towards him, that she is loue-sicke, and ready to sound therewith: and crieth out to haue them stay her vp with flagons, and to comfort her with apples. Here is a marueilous passion of loue. The similitude is drawne from hence, when a virgin is betrothed, and through the vehemencie of her loue towards her spouse, is sicke and soundeth. A greater or a more vehement, or passionate loue there cannot be. By this therfore the spirituall and holy loue of the Church is figured: for the faithful soule tasting the sweetnes of those apples, and of that heauenly wine, hath such a desire of Christ, as cannot with any words bee expressed. She sayth she is sicke of loue, and as it were swounding. And marke this well as a special point, where she seeketh helpe, and how she is supported. The sweetnes of those apples which she tasted, & of ỹ precious wine, brought her into this passion: yet her appetite & desire of them is not thereby diminished, but she desireth the so much the more. She calleth for flagons of that wine to comfort and refresh her spirits, and to haue those same apples strowed vnder her, that

she

ſhe may be refreſhed with their ſweete ſent. The faithfull whom Chriſt leadeth into the houſe of wine, euen vnto the banquet of heauenly things, doe not receiue the ſame in full meaſure, but as it were a taſte is giuen them by ſmall drops: which S. Paul calleth *the firſt fruits of the ſpirit*, Rom. 8. verſ. 23. And, *the earneſt of the ſpirit*, Epheſ. 1. Now by theſe drops they doe perceiue what a wonderfull ſweetnes there is in thoſe heauenlie things, and hereupon they be euen as it were ſick with loue, and readie to ſwound with the deſire of hauing more: for you ſee that ſhe crieth out for more. It is the will of God that his redeemed ſhal not while they liue here, be filled with thoſe precious things which bee in Chriſt, *in whom there is all fulnes, and of whoſe fulnes wee all receiue*. Ioh. 1. 16. But a meaſure is diſtilled into their ſoules as it were by little creuiſes, & ſo they doe ſtill hunger and thirſt after them exceedingly. But vnto whom doth ſhe crie out for the flagons, and for thoſe ſweete apples? She ſeemeth not to direct her wordes vnto Chriſt: for ſhee ſpeaketh in the plurall number, and not vnto ſome one. Verily ſhee calleth vnto thoſe into whoſe hands Chriſt hath committed theſe treaſures to deliuer vnto her. And who be they? Euen his faithfull ſeruants, the Prophets and Apoſtles and all holy teachers. For by the miniſtrie of theſe, the Lord hath deliuered vnto his Church all thoſe heauenly dainties. They haue alwayes

fed her: and therefore she doth rightly direct her speech vnto them, not as vnto the authors, but as vnto the ministers of those things: for she knoweth that they be wholly and altogether from her welbeloued. *They be but as stewards and dispossers of the mysteries of God.* 1. Cor. 4. 1. I neede not stand to make proofe of this, which all that haue any sparke of true knowledge do confesse. But let vs obserue here some things for our instruction. As first, what is the cause that few are sicke & ready to swound with the loue of Christ? Or that so few in comparison of the multitude, doe call for the flagons of the heauenly wine, and for the sweete apples? We see that almost all do seeke after gold and siluer, bending their whole studie and care night and day how they may get them. The cause is manifest, men by nature can tell what these things are worth, and doe feele commodities arising by them which are sweete to the flesh. They neuer tasted of those rich dainties which be in Christ, and therefore they be not moued with any desire of them. For who can long for those things which hee neuer felt any sweetnes of? Nay the madnes of the world goeth yet further: for they mocke and scorne at the bride, when she thus calleth for these heauenlie things. For if they see any that is earnestly affected to call vnto the Apostles and Prophets in their writings, and to the faithfull teachers that publish the same, to haue this wholesome wine

and

and daintie apples miniſtred vnto them, though they doe it not ſo earneſtly as they themſelues ſeeke golde: yet they deeme them to bee out of their wits, to be fooliſh and mad. Doubtles they bee more then mad which preferre earthly and tranſitorie things, euen very droſſe, before the rich treaſures which are in Chriſt. Then further, you ſhall haue many that wil confeſſe that in deede all good things are in Chriſt, and that ſuch onely are happie as be partakers of the ſame, and a deſire they ſeeme to haue to inioy them: but they diſdaine that which the holie Church dooth here, they will by no meanes ſeeke them at their hands whom the Lord hath made the diſpoſers. They deſpiſe the doctrine of the Prophets and Apoſtles, they care not for hearing the ſame publiſhed. They know not that the true Church, euen all the faithfull, do call vnto the miniſters of the liuely word, *Stay me vp with flagons, and comfort me with apples.* No, they will receiue all as it were immediatly from Chriſt himſelf. Theſe are blind, and bewitched by Satan: for they doe not know Gods ordinance, and how Chriſt doth feede his Church with heauenly things, by the hands of his miniſters. Indeede they bee but inſtruments, *Paul planteth, Apollo watereth: but God giueth the increaſe.* 1. Cor. 3. 6. It is the Lord himſelfe that ſupporteth his Church by his diuine power: and therefore you may ſee what ſhe addeth touching that matter in the next verſe, ſaying, *His*

left hand is vnder my head, and with his right hand he doth imbrace me. She doth so call (as we haue seene) for the things at the hands of the ministers: but she feeleth and confesseth that all the efficacie is from the Lord himselfe, shewing that he doth stay her vp with both hands. *His left hand* (sayth she) *is vnder my head, and with his right hand hee doth imbrace mee.* Then marke how we are to take heede of two extremities. It is Gods ordinance to deliuer all the heauenly treasures vnto vs, by the hands of his ministers: he worketh by them as by instruments, holding them as starres in his right hand, Reuel. 1. We must take heede that wee disdaine not to receiue them that way. And then wee must also beware that we depend not vpon the men, but with the Church here looke vp higher euen vnto the Lord himselfe, who worketh all in all. For by the ministrie of men we are to be led as it were by the hand vnto Christ, in him we are to stay, he onely must vphold vs. Behold here the kindnes of our Lord Iesus Christ vnto those that trulie do seeke him. Their frailty is great, but he doth vphold thē and cōfort them with both hāds. Here is the rest, here is the ioy, here is the comfort of euery afflicted soule, to bee receiued thus into the armes of Christ. And what saith he? *Come vnto me all ye that trauaile and be heauie laden, and I will refresh you.* Matth. 11. 28. Here is a sweete Sauiour to come vnto. These things are plaine and easie:

but

but that which followeth in the next verſe is ſomewhat hard to be expounded. The words are theſe, *I charge you, O you daughters of Ieruſalem, by the roes and by the hindes of the field, that you ſtirre not vp, nor wake my loue vntill ſhe pleaſe.* In deed they are thus to be tranſlated: *I adiure you, O daughters of Ieruſalem, or I lay an othe vpon you, or cauſe you to ſweare by the roes or by the hindes of the field, if you ſtirre vp, or if you awake, &c.* for hee vſeth the word of making others to take an othe. Here will ariſe ſome difficultie about this maner of othe, by the roes or hindes: but the greateſt difficultie is to finde whether it bee Chriſt that giueth this ſtraight charge, or the Church. By our Engliſh tranſlation, you may ſay there is no doubt, but that Chriſt giueth this charge, becauſe it is, *that you wake not my loue, vntill ſhe pleaſe.* For if it were the Church, ſhe would ſay, *that you wake not my loue vntill hee pleaſe.* Yea but it is not ſo eaſily diſcuſſed by the Hebrew text: for the word *loue, ahabhah*, is feminine: and if the Church call Chriſt her loue, the conſtruction is with a verbe of the feminine gender. Some doe expound it, that the Lord Ieſus, dooth charge the falſe ſiſters of the Church, the degenerate aſſemblies of Idolaters, that they doe not moleſt nor trouble this happie peace and reſt of the Church, which ſhe hath in him: for the diuell hath plentie of

ſuch

such to worke his disquietnes withall. Some others doe make some reasons to proue that it is not Christ, but the Church which giueth this straight charge, not vnto her false sisters, but vnto her companions, that they do not by any rude behauiour cause Christ to depart away, or to withdraw himselfe. Indeede the Church is to warne all her weake daughters to carrie themselues reuerently and purely in the presence of Christ, that they doe not any thing that may displease him. The reasons alleadged are not so strōg as to proue it of necessitie to be the speech of the Church, and therefore I will not rehearse them. Which of them speake it, the matter is of great waight, as appeareth by the charge that is giuen by othe. But now touching this othe: are we not to sweare onely by the Lord God? Is it not he alone that searcheth the hearts and the raines, and can tell when there is integritie? Is not he alone the patron of the iust and innocent, and the taker of vengeance vpon such as abuse his name? How then is heere an othe giuen by creatures? Some doe expound the words with an eclipse, thus, *Abide you abroad with the roes or with the hindes of the field.* Others doe take it not as an othe, but as an obtestation: as if these things, namely, the roes and hindes onely are called to witnesse: as you knowe that is an vsuall thing in the Prophets, to call vpon creatures to

beare

beare witnesse. As Moses calleth heauen and earth to record. Verily it doth not seeme here to be a simple obtestation: yet doth it not warrant men to take an othe by creatures, in as much as all things in this Song be mysticall. If it bee an othe giuen by Christ for the quiet of his Church; let vs take heede least wee incurre the danger of it, by being found among her disturbers. If it be the Church that chargeth vs to beware of light and wanton, or rude behauiour in the presence of so holie and so glorious a king; let vs feare and tremble, let vs studie continually to be holie and pure, meete to be admitted into the banquetting house, and to be in the presence of a King and Queene so glorious.

Thus much for this time.

Let vs pray.

THE

THE FOVRTH SERMON.

Chap. II.

8 *It is the voice of my welbeloued, beholde he commeth leaping ouer the mountaines, and skipping ouer the hilles.*

9 *My welbeloued is like a Roe, or a young Hinde: beholde he ſtandeth behinde our wall, looking through the windowes, ſhewing himſelfe through the grates.*

10 *My welbeloued ſpake and ſaid vnto me, ariſe my loue, my faire one, and come away.*

11 *For beholde the winter is paſt, the raine is thanged and gone away.*

12 *The flowers appeare in the earth, the time of the ſinging of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.*

13 *The figge tree hath brought forth her young figges: and the vines with their ſmall grapes haue caſt a ſauour: ariſe my loue, my faire one, and come away.*

14 *My doue, that art in the holes of the rocke, in the ſecret places of the ſtaires, ſhew me thy face,*

make

make me to heare thy voice, for thy voice is ſweet, and thy face is comely.

15 *Take vs the foxes, the little foxes, which deſtroy the vines, for our vines haue ſmall grapes.*

16 *My welbeloued is mine, and I am his, he feedeth among the lilies.*

17 *Vntill the day breake, and the ſhadowes flie away: returne my welbeloued, and be like a Roe, or a young Hart vpon the mountaines of Bether.*

IN the former part of this chapter, wee haue ſeene how Chriſt Ieſus calling himſelfe a roſe and a lilie, giueth vs to vnderſtand that in him is the fountaine, the fulnes and perfection of all ſweet and goodlie things. Alſo that from his ſweetnes and beautie, his Church is made ſo ſweete and faire, that ſhe excelleth all other daughters, as far as the pure white lilie doth the thornes. Then ſhe ſetteth forth the praiſe of her welbeloued, by a compariſon alſo: namely, that as the apple tree excelleth the trees of the wood; ſo doth he excell the ſonnes. And further, by the ſhadow of this tree, and the fruite, and by being led into the houſe of wine, ſhee declareth that in him, ſhee is made partaker of all heauenly bleſſings, and feeling his loue, ſhe is euen ſicke with loue towards him, calling for the further partaking of thoſe

graces,

graces, and is imbraced, comforted and supported by Christ. Lastly, a straight charge is giuen, that this may not be interrupted. Now in the rest of this chapter, vnder another similitude, namely of the flourishing spring, she setteth forth, how he calleth her forth to the viewing and partaking of those heauenly things. I will first lay open vnto you (as I may say) the letter of the allegorie: for thereby we shall the more easilie come to the sense. Consider of two louers here in the world betrothed, the one to the other. The woman remaining in the house in the winter; the man often abroad in the fields, and when the spring time is come, he calleth & inuiteth his spouse to come forth to walke, and to take the delight and comfort of those pleasant things, which the spring doth afford. Euen so the Church, the beloued spouse of Christ, being of her selfe here in this world, as it were shut vp in the house vnder the barrennes of winter, is by her welbeloued called vpon to come forth as it were to walke, to view, and to take the solace and comfort of that heauenly spring. This is the summe of all that shee doth here report. And now let vs come to the particulars. *It is the voyce* (saith she) *of my welbeloued, beholde hee commeth leaping ouer the mountaines, and skipping ouer the hilles. My welbeloued is like a Roe, or a young Hinde.* In these words you see, that she sheweth how she perceiued his comming, and the maner of his comming.

ming. She perceiueth his comming by his voice: she heareth his voice, she knoweth his voice, *It is the voice* (saith she) *of my welbeloued, beholde he commeth.* The Lord Iesus doth call his chosen by his holy word, that is his voice. And *they know his voice*, as he saith, Iohn 10. *My sheepe heare my voice.* By faith they discerne his voice, euen the heauenly and pure doctrine: the men of this world, euen the infidels, cannot heare him. There be many opinions say they, how can we tel which is the truth? And marke how by his voice, that is, by his liuelie worde shee perceiueth that Christ commeth vnto her. It is a spirituall and an inuisible comming, and she hath a spirituall eare to heare, and eyes of the spirite to beholde him. *Let him that hath an eare* (saith ỹ holy Ghost) *heare what the spirit saith to the Churches*, Reuel. 2. and 3. This voice of Christ soundeth in the world, but none heare it, none ioy in it but the holy Church with her children. You may reade in Prouerbs chapter 1. How Salomon there saith, *that the highest wisedome* (that is Christ) *vttereth her voice aloud in the streets, in the open places and assemblies, but is not regarded.* Onely (I say) the Church heareth, and is so ioyfull at it, that she saith, *beholde he commeth.* Then touching the maner of his comming, shee setteth it forth not onely to be swift and speedie, comparing him *to a Roe or young Hinde*, but also that no difficulties in the way can hinder or let him: for he leapeth

leapeth ouer mountaines and hilles. A most worthie thing to bee noted, that nothing can keepe backe or seperate Christ from his Church, his loue is so great towards her. There be euen as it were high hilles and mountaines of sinnes in the people of God, which might separate, and the diuell raiseth vp bankes to make the way vnpleasant; but hee passeth ouer all these high mountaines: so aboundant is his kindenes and loue. Saint Paul handleth this pointe, Rom. 8. 38. 39. *Neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to seperate vs from the loue of God which is in Christ Iesus our Lord.* Of this the spouse glorieth, saying, *Beholde he commeth leaping ouer the mountaines, and skipping ouer the hilles.* To conclude this point, wee see that the faithfull doo by the voice of Christ perceiue him comming vnto them, and that hee commeth swiftly ouer all lets.

Now to the next point wherin is set forth how they see him present. *Beholde* (saith she) *he standeth behinde our walle, looking through the windows, shewing himselfe through the gates.* This doth expresse ỳ Christ doth not in full maner exhibite and shew himselfe present vnto his Church in this world. He standeth as it were behinde the walle, and looketh in at the windowes, shewing himselfe through latteses: this is cleare and manifest,

nifest, for Abraham saw him: the Prophets and Moses saw him: yea, all the godlie vnder the law saw him: but yet vnder types and shadowes, as it were looking in through the windowes. And since hee was manifested in the flesh, and hath shewed himselfe more fully, we see him present but by faith. *Behold* (saith he) *I am with you vnto the end of the world:* But yet the Church seeth him present, but by the eyes of faith. Also as Saint Paul saith, *we know but in parte*, 1. Cor. 13. Wee see him not fully, but as it were through the windowes. Then marke yet further how she proceedeth in setting forth, how he calleth her: *My welbeloued spake and said vnto me, arise my loue, my faire one, and come away.* What meaneth this? Verelie the regenerate, euen the holy ones of God, are regenerate but in part while they liue here. There remaineth still in them a lumpe of corruption, and so far as that extendeth, they be earthly minded, and euen willinglie sit downe in this world, hauing their affections somewhat entangled with the cares and pleasures of the flesh: wherefore this is the continuall voice of Christ sounding in their eares, arise O yee whom I loue, which are faire in my sight, and come away. Arise, arise from the loue and delight in earthly things, and set your affection vpon the things which are aboue. I neede not to stand in the amplification of this point, the holy scripture in all places, both in the Prophets and Apostles, is full

of these voices which call vpon vs to arise vp in our hearts and mindes from these transitorie things which be vpon the earth vnto heauen and heauenly things. Happie are we if we doo heare this voyce of Christ calling vs so louingly, so that we obey it. O how dull, how heauie, how lumpish and prone to the earth are we, which are so little moued with this continuall call of our most louing sauiour? We are readie to minde earthly things, and euen to sit downe in them, and yet our conuersation is in heauen, Phil. 3. There is the holy citie where our freedome is; after that wee should long. We are here but pilgrimes & strangers for a time: why doo we then sit downe? why doo we not, as we are here willed, arise and come away? The worldlings are not moued with this, for they can feele no taste nor sweetenes in any thing but the world, and it is death to them to heare this voice: *arise and come away.* Can they willingly part from their treasure, yea I may say, euen from their God vpon which they haue set their heart, that is to say, their golde, their siluer, their houses and their lands? Let it not be so with vs: but let vs arise with our holy mother, at the voice of Christ: let vs in heart and minde ascend vp into the heauens, *vsing the things of this world as though wee vsed them not*, according to the doctrine of the holy Apostle, 1. Cor. 7. Moreouer, let vs marke here, how our Lord Iesus Christ lifteth vp his Church from this earth vnto the hea-

uens,

ours, euen by his mightie voyce. All the faithfull in themselues are euen like vnto heauie stones, which doe flie so farre vpward as they are driuen by a force: and when that force ceaseth, they come downe againe a pace to the earth. For look how farre the Lord with his voyce, and loue lifteth vs vp, so farre we ascend: and if that worke not any longer, we come downe with speede.

In the next place we haue the allegorie, vnder which the Lord doth perswade the Church to arise, and come away from the loue of these earthly things, vnto the meditation and desire of the heauenly and spirituall life. It is taken from the times of the yeare. In winter all things lie as it were barren vnder frost and snow and colde blasts. There is no pleasure to be taken then. But in the spring time all sweete things spring and bud forth, and there is the melodie of birds singing. Then is there comfort and solace to be taken in walking abroad. Therefore he saith, *For behold the winter is past, the raine is changed and gone away.* And then hee addeth a description of the spring, by the flowers that appeare, by the singing of birds, by the voyce of the turtle, by the fig tree bringing forth figs, and the vines with their first grapes casting forth a smell. The perswasion then being drawne from the comparison of the times, wee are to consider how it standeth in the mysticall sense. And that is, what the state of all the elect was before their calling: and then what

it is after they be called of the Lord and regenerate. Before they be called, their hearts bee euen like the earth in winter, vnder the colde froſt and ſtormes of ſinne: for there can no ſweete thing grow vp, there is an vtter barrennes. After that the Lord hath called them, and that they bee regenerate, there is an heauenly warmth of his ſpirit, and the ſweete dew of his graces, and then the ſweete flowers appeare, then the holeſome fruites doe bud forth: then is there peace and ioy in the holy Ghoſt, euen heauenly melodie, which is repreſented heere by the ſinging of the birds. Then the perſwaſion ſtandeth thus vnto euery one of the faithfull, which yet are ſomewhat entangled with earthly things, and with the loue of this preſent world, ſo that their affections are not ſo lifted vp, and ſet vpon the deſire of the heauenly things as they ought to be: *ariſe O my loue, my faire one, and come away*: for you ought not to ſet your hearts now vpon things that are vain and tranſitorie, as you did in the dayes of your ignorance, when you lay froſen in your ſinnes. For hauing now been made partakers of the heauenly graces, you muſt take your ſolace and delight in heauenly things. It is a very ſtrange thing to conſider the ſlacknes that is in the holie Saints of God, to ariſe vp from this vaine world, vnto the meditation and ioy of the world to come. When we haue felt the worke of God in vs, vnto our great ioy and comfort, when the ſweet flow-

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ers and holesome fruites haue budded foorth in vs: yet a drowsines doth come vpon vs, and wee could euen willingly seate our selues here below, together with those men which haue their portion in this life. It is no marueile, that men, so long as they haue not tasted of heauenly things, doe greedily lay holde of this world and cleaue vnto it: they know no better: but as I sayd, is it not very strange and marueilous, that such as haue been euen rauished in their mindes with the sweetnes of Christ, should euen waxe colde againe? Thus it falleth out, and therefore she reporteth how he calleth againe: *arise my loue, my faire one, and come away*. He calleth againe and againe, *Arise my loue, my faire one, and come away*. So hard a thing it is to draw our mindes from this earthly trash. But most especially you may note in this place, the wonderfull kindnes of Christ Iesus our Lord, who notwithstanding the dulnes of his chosen, yet esteemeth them so highly, as appeareth by his speeches, *Arise my loue, my faire one, &c.* Wee see plainly by this, that the great imperfections which remaine in the regenerate, doe not diminish the loue of Christ towards them, for they bee still his loue: nor make them deformed or loathsome in his eyes, for he sayth, *my faire one*. From hence wee may draw two very good and necessarie instructions. The one is for our comfort against the temptations of the diuell, who taketh occasion

by the frailties and imperfections which are in vs, to beare vs in hand that wee bee vtterly deformed in the eyes of Christ, and that he dooth not loue, but hate vs. Beloued, if a man haue touching true faith and repentance, a sinceritie and an vnfained vprightnes of heart; let him be assured, that albeit he be clogged with much corruption of the flesh, the burthen whereof doth make him to sigh and grone, seeming deformed in his own eyes: yet is hee beautifull and deare vnto Christ. Then the other instruction is, that we are to imitate this kindnes of our Lord and master. Many when they beholde some things amisse in those that professe the Gospell of Christ, neuer looke vpon their vertues, although they shine: but abhorre and despise them. Let vs take heed of this, and let vs entirely loue and esteeme them faire and precious, which feare the Lord and studie to obey him, although wee see in them otherwise many great imperfections. This example of Christ leadeth vs hereunto, who calleth her his loue, and his faire one, which yet is so addicted in part vnto this vaine world, and so dull to the meditation and delight in heauenly things, that he calleth vnto her againe and againe: *Arise and come away, arise and come away.* Yea wee may perceiue this slacknes, and as it were halting dulnes, that is in the Saints, in that he calleth vpon her, and vseth yet a further perswasion vnto her in the next verse, to come foorth vnto him. The

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words are theſe; *My doue, which art in the clifts of the rocke, in the ſecret of the ſtayer, ſhew me thy face, make me to heare thy voyce; for thy voyce is ſweete, and thy face is comely.* The latter part of this ſentence is cleere and eaſie to be vnderſtood, that he calleth vnto her to come into his companie, and to talke with him; adding this encouragement, that ſhe is beautifull and welfauoured of face, and her ſpeech is vnto him ſweete and pleaſant. But how are wee to take the former part, which is this, *My doue, which art in the clifts of the rock, in the hollow place of the ſtaier?* Here is a myſticall ſpeech, which wee are to enquire the meaning of. Firſt, according to the letter, wee know that a doue dooth ſeeke for ſome hole or hollow place in a rocke, or other high thing, into which ſhe doth enter to be ſecret and ſafe from the deuouring birds that would eate her vp, as alſo from the fowler. Euen ſo this doue, this ſimple, meeke, harmeles and chaſt ſpouſe of the Lord Ieſus, hath her dwelling in the hollow place of an high rocke, the clifts whereof are as ſtayres, but ſo as in a rocke they bee ſuch as men cannot clime vp. But what is this rocke then in which this doue reſteth? No man can deny but that this rocke is the moſt high God. You know that the holy Prophet Dauid calleth him, *the rock of his ſaluation.* This is a rocke which none can clime vnto, in the clift of this rocke the doue dwelleth ſafe. Satan is euen like vnto a greedie

kite, which alwaies lieth in waite for to deuoure her: but she remaineth close in this rocke, where he cannot come at her. What is then to be vnderstood by the clift or hollow place of this rocke? Surely it is Gods eternall counsell and election of his Church vnto life and glorie: for it is in that holy counsell of the Lord, euen as in the hollow place of a most high rocke, that this doue dwelleth safe. S. Paul sayth, *The foundation of God standeth sure, and hath this seale, God knoweth who be his.* 2. Tim. 2. vers. 19. And our Sauiour sheweth, that *it is not possible that the elect should perish.* Matth. 24. It is a madnes for any man to thinke that almightie God can erre, or that hee can change his purpose, yea or that any can withstand the same. Therefore in his eternall counsell and election, as in a most sure rocke, the saluation of the Church resteth. The prince of darknes hath endeuoured with all his forces to assaile the same, but all in vaine, Reuel. 12. Thus we see briefly what is meant by this that he calleth *her his doue which is in the clifts of the rocke.* Where we note what a weake state the Church were in, if she had not her abode in this rocke. For if she were out of it, looke how the poore harmeles doue is a prey vnto the deuouring hawk, so should she bee vnto her enemies: her strength is in this high rocke, her safetie in the place in which shee remaineth, in her selfe she is but as a sillie doue: from this rocke (as I sayd) none can plucke her

downe.

down. For marke what Christ saith touching that matter, *My sheep heare my voice, & I know thē, and they follow me: and I giue vnto them eternall life, and they shall not perish for euer, neither shall any plucke thē out of mine hand. My father that gaue them me is greater then all, neither can any plucke them out of the hand of my father. I and the father are one*, Iohn 10. vers. 27, 28, 29, 30. There is then no destroying of this doue, though she be in her selfe but as a doue, the hawke, the kite, or the fowler, cannot reach vnto her. Blessed bee the Lorde God, who hath thus prouided for the safetie of his poore seruants: and blessed be the power of his maiestie world without ende.

Now let vs obserue further, wherefore the bridegrome doth make mention of this, that his doue is in the clefts of the rocke. Surely he doth herein note the very well head and fountaine of all heauenly blessings: according as Saint Paul openeth the matter, saying, *Blessed be God euen the father of our Lorde Iesus Christ, who hath blessed vs with all spirituall blessings in heauenlie things in Christ, as hee had chosen vs in him before the foundation of the world was laide, that we should be holie and without blame before him through loue*, Ephes. 1. vers. 3, 4. Then further, he vseth it as an argument to moue his spouse to the contemplation of heauenly things. As if hee should speake thus vnto her, O my doue, thou art from euerlasting in the secret counsell of the

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most high God chosen in me, and ordained vnto eternall glorie in the heauens: thou art prepared for things far more excellent then these that bee transitorie, set not thine heart therefore vpon them, but lift vp thy minde and thine affection vnto heauenly things, meditate vpon them and delight therein, come so into my presence, and let me see thy face, and heare thy voice. Iudge in your selues beloued, is it meete that such as bee chosen to be heires of eternall glorie, should set their hart vpō the things of this world? Surely, all the while ỹ they do so, they do euen hide their faces frō Christ, they do not vtter their voice vnto him. Marke then I pray you, how that when the faithfull soule doth rise vp in contemplation from these earthly things vnto the heauenly, taking her delight and solace in them, shee doth then shew her face vntō Christ, she maketh him then to heare her voice. And then is her voice sweete vnto him, for shee vttereth vnto him many sweete praiers, praises and thankes for all his benefits: and her face also is faire and delightsome vnto him. What an encouragement is this to make vs seeke after the Lord Iesus? Doth he call vpon vs in this maner, and doth he thus esteeme the voice and beautie of the faithfull soule that commeth vnto him? And shall we be slacke? Shall we lie drousie and dull in our affections? Let this same speech of Christ be euen printed in our mindes, *My doue that art in the holes of the rocke, in the secret place*

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of the ſtayre, ſhew mee thy face, make mee to heare thy voice, for thy voice is ſweete, and thy face is comelie. Is not this a moſt ſweete voice of our Sauiour which hee vttereth vnto euery one of vs? Ought it not to make vs to run ſwiftlie vnto him? Are they not worthie a thouſand times to periſh, who ſet light by the calling of ſo louing a Sauiour? Ariſe, ſtirre vp your ſelues, be not ſo earthly minded, but delight in heauenly things, let your mind aſcend vp vnto Chriſt, and talke with him. If he were auſtere, or did deſpiſe vs, it might haue ſome colour for negligence, but when hee doth thus call vpon vs to come, what excuſe can there be? Let vs not bee like to the idolatrous papiſts, who ſeeke vnto other mediators & interceſſors, as if we poore wretches might not bee ſo bolde as to preſume to come vnto him. You ſee how that he willeth his doue to come to him, he doth not ſend her vnto others: ſaying, *ſhew mee thy face, make me to heare thy voice.* Shall wee then beleeue the diuell, who in the popiſh Church telleth vs, that we muſt deuoutely worſhip and pray to ſome ſaint, that ſo we may procure his or her fauour to intreate Chriſt for vs, becauſe it is ouer great preſumption for vs to come directly vnto him? O beloued, will you giue credite vnto ſuch, againſt the flat voice of the Lorde? Looke alſo what is written, *Seeing therefore brethren, that by the blood of Ieſus we may be bolde to enter into the holy place, by the new and liuing way, which*

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he hath prepared for vs, through the vaile that is his flesh: and seeing we haue an high priest which is ouer the house of God. Let vs draw neere with a true heart, in assurance of faith, sprinckled in our hearts from an euill conscience, and washed in our bodies with pure water, Hebr. 10. vers. 19, 20, 21, 22. Thus are wee willed to goe to the Lorde our God himselfe.

Now it followeth, *Take vs the foxes, the little foxes, which destroy the vines, for our vines haue small grapes*. Here is a charge giuen, and a reason rendred: the charge is, that they should catch the foxes, yea euen the little foxes: the reason is, because they destroy the vines, being yet in showting forth their small grapes. Here arise diuers questions, as first, who giueth this charge, take vs the foxes. Secondly, to whom this busines is committed. Thirdly, what maner of foxes these be, and how they destroy the vines. And lastly, how they are to be taken. Touching the first, it is Christ who giueth this charge. Hee hath care ouer his vine, he hath authoritie to commaunde, and the Church doth here reporte his speech, and also vnder his authoritie, doth commaunde likewise the same thing. Then for the second, it is out of all doubte that this charge is laide vpon all the faithfull pastors and teachers, and godly princes. Concerning the third, these foxes be false teachers, heretikes and seducers of the Lords people. These bee called foxes, because of their subtiltie and

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craft: for all sorts of heretikes and false teachers doo winde in themselues craftely, making a shew of truth and holines. *They come in sheepes cloathing* (as our Sauiour saith, Matth. 7. 15.) *But inwardlie they be nothing but rauening wolues.* It may seeme very strange how such destroying foxes, yea such grieuous rauening wolues, as the holy Ghost termeth them, Matth. 7. Acts. 20. should make such a faire shew of truth and holines, as that they should seduce and draw men from the right way, into the crooked by-waies of heresies and errors, and so destroy and waste the vines. But Saint Paul sheweth a reason, that it is no meruaile, for speaking of the foxes of his time, he saith, *Such false Apostles are deceitfull workers, transformed into the Apostles of Christ: and no meruaile,* (saith he) *for Satan himselfe is transformed into an Angell of light: therefore it is no great thing, though his ministers transforme themselues, as though they were the ministers of righteousnes,* 2 Cor. 11. vers. 13, 14, 15. These foxes then haue their subtiltie from that great foxe the diuell. Many and differing sorte of these foxes were in the time of the law, and many also haue euer been vnder the gospell, and shall be euen to the ende of the world: among which the great Romish foxe is the principall. And howsoeuer they be differing in their errors and false opinions, yet herein they meete in one, that they be all subtile foxes, wasting & destroying the vines

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of Christ. Here wee may beholde the estate of Gods Church: that there shall alwaies be foxes that will creepe in among the vines: and if there be not (as I may say) hunters to hunt and to catch them, wee may eahlie perceiue what perill the young grapes be in. We are therefore to pray instantly vnto the Lord, who hath planted this vine, that he wil alwaies raise vp wise and vigilant keepers, which may in deede catch these wilie foxes: and therein we come to the fourth point, which is, how they must bee taken. Doubtles the faithfull ministers of the gospell are said to catch them, when by the word of God they doo strongly confute their heresies, and by excommunication cast them forth of the Church. Then seeing heretikes being conuinced, yet continue obstinate, and do sinne, euen condemned by their own iudgement as Paul saith, Titus. 3. vers. 11. and so will impudently goe forward to destroy the Church, the godlie magistrates are with ciuill and corporall punishments to catch them. Thus we see the care which the Lord hath ouer his vine, that the foxes may bee taken which are readie to destroy the grapes, euen in their first budding, they would seduce the faithfull, euen while they bee young and weake.

It followeth, *My welbeloued is mine, and I am his, which feedeth among the lilies.* Vpon all those former speeches of Christs which shee repeated, shee doth breake forth into a glorying,

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not glorying in deede in her ſelfe, but in him: according to that which S. Paul alleageth out of the Prophet, *Hee that glorieth, let him glorie in the Lord*, 1. Cor. 1. verſ. 31. And marke what it is that ſhee glorieth of, for it is in deede that, in which conſiſteth her whole felicitie, namely, the communion which is betwixt the Lorde Ieſus Chriſt and her, and the ſweete fruite which ſhe receiueth thereby. This holy communion is expreſſed after this maner, *My welbeloued is mine, and I am his.* Here we muſt firſt note that there is an vnion betwixt Chriſt and his Church, from whence commeth this communion. Hee is her head, and ſhe is by the ſpirite vnited vnto him as his myſticall bodie: he being her head, whatſoeuer is in him, it is hers, and therefore it is ſaid, *that he is made vnto vs of God, wiſedome, righteouſnes, ſanctification, and redemption*, 1. Cor. 1. *It hath pleaſed the father, that in him all fulnes ſhould dwell*, Coloſſ. 1. verſ. 19. In him is holines, in him is power, in him is life eternall: and all theſe things doo flow from him the head vpon her: for ſhe ſaith, *My welbeloued is mine.* Behold then what an incomparable treaſure ſhee doth boaſt of, when ſhe ſaith, *My welbeloued is mine?* For all the riches, the ioies and the glorie of heauen are hers: for he being hers, all is hers; ſeeing nothing that is good is wanting in him. From hence it is that the Apoſtle ſaith, *He will make her to himſelfe a glorious Church*, Epheſ. 5. And

then

then on the other side she saith, *And I am his*, by this expressing, that as he hath redeemed her with his owne blood, yea as he hath taken vpon him her sinne, her curse, her death, and hath made her righteous in himselfe, and inheritor with him of eternall glorie, so she doth consecrate her selfe wholie vnto him: she is onely his, shee forsaketh all other. She committeth not whoredome with idols, shee doth not imbrace the doctrines of diuels, she doth not set her heart vpon the vaine delights and pleasures of sinne, but shee delighteth in him, he is her ioy, she is pure and chaste and holy vnto him, and offereth vnto him all the sweete and delectable fruites of her faith and loue towards him. This is ỳ which the holy Apostle saith, *That he had prepared the Church of Corinth, that he might present them as a pure virgin vnto one man, euen to Christ*, 2. Cor. 11. vers. 2. What shall we say then vnto those, which would haue Christ to be theirs, but they will be none of his? They seeme to boast of a faith in his death and passion, as if by the same they should obtaine righteousnes and life eternall: but they bee vncleane, they liue not vnto Christ, they be not led with his spirite, and therefore they be not his: for what doctrine they professe, they doe not greatly care, and the worlde and fleshlie pleasures are their ioy: fruites they offer vp none vnto Christ. O happie is that soule, which with a true and liuelie faith can say, *My welbeloued is mine,*

and

and I am his. And vnhappie are they which say he is theirs, and yet they are not his, they liue not vnto him. Then she saith, that *he feedeth among the lilies:* we know that the lilies are faire, sweet, soft, and pleasant, and therefore the Church saith that her spouse feedeth his flocks among the lilies: which is to let vs know, that he feedeth her with most excellent things. Most true it is, that there is nothing vnder heauen that can be esteemed as a full shadow or resemblance of the heauenly Manna, wherewith Christ feedeth the soules of his: but the Church vseth that which may in some sorte resemble it. And now there remaineth onely the last verse of this chapter, in which the holy spouse vpon the feeling of those former benefites, concludeth with a vehement prayer vnto Christ, saying, *Vntill the day breake, and the shadowes flie away, returne my welbeloued, and be like a Roe or a young Harte vpon the the mountaines of Bether.* The summe of her prayer is, that her welbeloued from whom shee receiueth all her comfort, would come speedelie vnto her in all her neede, all the time of her peregrination heere vpon earth: and not by any meanes bee seperated from her. In deede the words are mysticall, and her first speech is as much as to say vntill the morning, when shee saith, *Vntill the day dawne, and the shadowes flie away.* For the night is but the shadowe of the earth, so that the sunne comming vnto our Hori-

zon, with his beames causeth all shadowes to flie away from the vpper face of the earth. The church vpō earth, is as it were in the night, as some take it, vnder the shadowes of the law which should, and did flie away after that cleere day of Christs resurrection? For when our Lord was manifested in the flesh, it was a cleare day in comparison of the time of the law, when they had all vnder shadowes: but we may extend this prayer (as I take it) more fitly to the second comming of the bridegrome, for then in deede shall be the perfect cleare day: then shall all shadowes vanish and there shall be no obscuritie, but most gloriōus light. In Psalme 49. where the Prophet speaketh of the wicked, and saith that the righteous shall haue dominion ouer them in the morning, hee speaketh it of the day of the generall iudgement, which is the beginning, and euen as the morning of that euerlasting most glorious light, in which the saints shall dwell. She prayeth then, that vntill that most glorious morning, while she is here in the wildernes, he will be like a Roe, or a young Hart, that is, that he will come swiftlie vnto her, for her defence and comfort in all her tribulations. Her enemies are great, and her frailties are many, and she prayeth that he will passe ouer all lets of her sinnes, or whatsoeuer, which shee calleth the mountaines of Bether, that is, of seperation. We see then that this is a most sweete prayer of the Church, and which euery faithfull soule

doth

doth earnestly powre forth vnto him, that he will come speedily vnto them, to defend and comfort them while they be here in the middest of cruell enemies, of frailties and calamities. O Lord Iesus come speedily, and saue vs. Ameth.

THE FIFT SERMON.

CHAP. III.

1 *In my bed by night, I sought him whom my soule loueth, I sought him, but I found him not.*

2 *I will arise now and goe about in the citie, by the streetes, and by the open places, I will seek him whom my soule loueth, I sought him, but I found him not.*

3 *The watchmen that went about the citie found me: haue you seen him whō my soule loueth?*

4 *When I had passed a little from them, then I found him whom my soule loueth, I laid holde on him, and left him not vntill I had brought him vnto my mothers house, into the chamber of her that conceined me.*

5 *I charge you, O daughters of Ierusalem, by the roes and by the hindes of the field, that ye stir not vp, nor wake my loue, vntill she please.*

IN the former Chapter, the bride made report how her loue Iesus Christ in most kinde maner

ſought her vp, and called vpon her againe and a-gaine to arife, and to come forth vnto him from the cares and delight in earthly things, vnto the meditation and ioy in things that bee heauenlie and ſpirituall. And now in this Chapter ſhe ſheweth how ſhe ſought after him, he hauing withdrawne himſelfe, and miſſing of him, yet ſhe ceaſſed not, nor gaue ouer ſeeking in all places, vntill ſhe found him, and brought him home vnto her mothers houſe. Here is then in ſome reſpect, a diuers and a differing eſtate and condition from the former. For the faithfull doe not continue alwaies alike: but euen now, Chriſt ſhewing himſelfe vnto them, and calling vpon them, they are euen rapt and enflamed with the loue and ioy of heauenly things. By and by, euen as a kettle vpon the fire, which while the flame is vehement dooth ſeeth faſt, and as the ſame ſlaketh, ſo it cooleth: they waxe ſomewhat colder, they fall into ſome drowſines and ſecuritie, they feele not the ioyes and delights which they did, Chriſt ſeemeth to bee gone from them. And then being either touched with ſome affliction, or moued by ſome meanes, they do ſeeke to feele the ſame ioyes that they felt in him before. They would alwaies feele them: for they be ioyes that paſſe all earthly ioyes, as the Prophet Dauid, Pſal. 4. ſheweth, that the light of Gods countenance put more gladnes into his heart, then the worldly men had whē they receiued great plen-

tie

tie of corne and wine and oyle, wherewith they make themselues merie. And how earnestly the holy spouse doth seeke after her welbeloued, her words will declare, which we will now come vnto. First let vs consider the externall things, which doe represent and figure the things which are inuisible, mysticall, spirituall and heauenlie. The Church is compared to a virgin betrothed, who dwelling in her mothers house in a citie, in which there be watchmen that goe about in the night, and while she is in her bed, her minde runneth vpon her welbeloued, she cannot endure his absence, but ariseth out of her bed, and euen in the night walketh about in the streetes of the citie for to seeke him. Who will not say that this were a vehement loue, that should cause a damosell to doe this? Indeede in this earthly loue it should passe modestie: but in the spirituall loue, as wee shall see, it is most highly to be commended. Let vs come then to the particulars. *In my bed* (sayth she) *by night*: What is the bed of the Church? where dooth she lie downe to rest and take ease? It is a drowsie securitie which the flesh bringeth, and in which all the true children of God, according to the flesh, could be content to nestle themselues, and euen to lie quiet and warme, were it not that they are moued by the operation of another spirit then their owne: for euen in this bed she seeketh. There is a worke wrought within, that will not let her altogether

forget her bridegroome: yea, the godlie in that coldnes which commeth vpon them, do remember what ioyes they haue felt in Christ, and often times they doe wish that they did euen continually feede them. But marke then how yet they seeke him vpon their bed, which is not to be allowed. Most gladly they would taste of his sweetnes, but withall they doe desire to haue ease and pleasure in the flesh: faine would they lie still in their warme bed. This (I say) is the thing which we all doe couet: faine would we feele the ioyes of heauen in Christ, and faine would wee also inioy the delights of the flesh: wee would haue both, but this will not bee: for marke how hee saith, *In my bed by night I sought him whom my soule loueth: I sought him, but I found him not.* She findeth him not while she is in her bed, hee will not so bee found. He that will finde Christ, must rowse himselfe out of that bed of carnall ease. If a man desire and wish to feele the sweetnes of Christ, and will also stuffe himselfe with carnall delights, he shall not taste of him: if he doe taste, it will vanish. Therfore the holy bride here goeth further and sayth, *I will arise.* Behold she ariseth out of her bed to seeke him, for there she cannot finde him, and find him she will. And when commeth she out of her bed? Euen in the night. If there be any time fit for the bed, it is the night, and then is it most inconuenient, and most it grieueth to come out of the bed. But she com-

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meth out of her bed euen in the night for to seek her loue. Rather then she will not finde him, she will forgoe and forsake all ease and pleasures in the world. Is this the true Church? and are these the right Christians? What shall wee say then vnto those which will forsake no delight nor pleasure to seeke Christ? They haue a desire to feele his sweetnes, but they lie still vpon their bed. O beloued, all you that haue euer tasted, as the holy Apostle Peter speaketh, how sweete the Lord is, 1. Pet. 2. and doe couet to taste him still, remember continually what is here done: seeke him, but come out of your bed. Let not your loue be so colde, as to bee withheld from seeking the Lord by any carnall delights. And beholde yet further, how the spouse doth not onely rise out of her bed to seeke her welbeloued, but also goeth forth into the streetes and open places of the citie, seeking al about for him. Here is a very great loue expressed, here is a marueilous zeale. A virgin to rise out of her bed, and in the vnseasonable time of the night to walke about in the lanes and streetes of the citie; what inconueniences and dangers might ensue? Well, she casteth no perils, her minde is so set vpon her spouse, that she cannot rest, her burning loue towards him thrusteth her forward to seek him, whatsoeuer come of it. But may she not seeme to be scarce well in her wits? Could she not tarrie vntill it were day? or might shee not haue patience to expect his

comming vnto her? Surely the worldlings doe wonder at those, which with feruent zeale and loue seeke after Iesus Christ: and they often times say plainly that they be more then halfe mad. For when they behold how the seruants of God debarre themselues from sinfull pleasures, giuing themselues to reading, hearing, and holy meditation in the lawes of God, that so they may obey him; they wonder as at a strange thing that they runne not with them vnto the same excesse of riot, as the holy Apostle sayth, and therefore they speake euill, 1. Pet. 4. vers. 4. When they see men so zealous in seeking Christ, as that neither the danger of their liues, nor losse of their goods can stay them; doe they not say, what mad fooles be these? They will not in any wise buy Christ so deare, they hope to get to heauen without any such trouble. They see no reason why they should deprive themselues of any pleasures or delights for to seeke heauenly things. They will not professe the Gospel so as to be mocked and pointed at: If any great man doe but frowne at them, they lay the Bible aside. I thinke you may easilie see the difference betweene these and the faithfull, who here vnder the person of the Church, are sayd to rise out of their beds in the night, and to seeke about in the streetes of the citie. These be not withheld with ease and pleasures, nor yet scared with perils and inconueniences. These do know that Christ is worth the seeking, although

they

they ſhould loſe their liues for ſeeking of him. Yea, they do approue ỳ doctrine of S. Paul, who ſaith, *that the light & momẽtany affliction of this life, are not worthie the glorie that ſhall be reuealled.* And how well the Lord approueth of this loue and zeale in his ſpouſe, aduenturing her ſelf thus to ſeek him, you may ſee by his own words in the Goſpell, when he ſaith, *That except a man denie himſelfe, take vp his croſſe and follow him, he cannot bee his diſciple.* And, *Whoſoeuer doth not forſake father and mother, wife and goods, yea and his life, he is not worthie of him.* But the Spouſe here ſayd, *I will ariſe and goe about in the citie, by the ſtreetes and open places, and I will ſeeke him whom my ſoule loueth*; then ſhe addeth, *I ſought him, but I found him not.* Here may two queſtions bee demanded: The one, whether the Church be euer without Chriſt: The other may bee this: whether the Lord doe not deale leſſe kindly with his Spouſe, in letting her wander about to ſeeke him, and doth not by and by ſhew himſelfe vnto her? Touching the firſt, it is out of all doubt that the Lord Ieſus is alwayes preſent with his Church: but the faithfull haue not alwayes the ſame liuely feeling of his preſence. He ſeemeth to hide himſelfe away and to be abſent: and then doe the godly labour to haue a more full and perfect ſenſe of his preſence: it is his ſecret worke in them that they ſeeke. And now for the other queſtion, that Chriſt doth ſuffer his

to seeke him through so many difficulties, and doth not at the first shew himselfe; it is not to be imputed vnto any want of kindnes, or for her hurt, but for her benefit: for it is for the triall and exercise of her faith, her loue and patience. Yea, it is to stirre vp and to kindle her affection more vehemently for to seeke after him. Finally, it is to teach all the godly to make precious account of retaining Christ with them. For when they are fallen into drowsines, and so haue lesse feeling: it is not so easie a matter to finde the Lord againe. Continue therefore your prayers and meditations, and all holy exercises by which the liuely feeling of Christs presence is continued. Well, while shee thus sought him all about, and found him not, the watchmen that went about in the citie found her. The watchmen in a citie doe passe to and fro, to see if there be any stirring whereby hurt may arise: and these doe finde her now in the streetes. Who may these watchmen bee? If the citie bee the visible Church (for the faithfull do dwel scattered in the visible Church among many counterfeit worshippers of God) then these watchmen are the pastors, who are to watch ouer the citie: as the Lord telleth the prophet Ezechiel, that hee had made him a watchman. But then if it bee so, why doe not these watchmen leade her vnto Christ, for that is their office and dutie? Surely it doth often fall out, that the shepheards themselues, euen the watch-

men ouer the house of Israel, do not know Christ aright, but are blinded with worldly pompe and couetousnes. She doth demand of them, if they haue seene him whom her soule loueth: but there is no mention of their answer. Either they made none, or else such an answer as could doe her no good. Well, she goeth but a little past them, and she findeth her welbeloued. Then we see plainly that she findeth him at the last. This is according to the promise, *Aske and ye shall haue, seeke and ye shall finde, knocke and it shall bee opened vnto you. For whosoeuer asketh receiueth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* Matth. 7. ver. 7. 8. Here is a goodly comfort vnto all those which with heartie affection doe seeke after Iesus Christ: for though they seeme for to lose their labour, yet let them not faint nor waxe weary, for in the ende they shall finde him. He is not out of the citie, albeit the blinde watchmen doe not see him. He will shew himselfe most comfortably vnto them that seeke him with an vpright heart, if they giue not ouer. Well are we if we bee wise and strong in this point: for many there bee which beare the name of Christians, which seeke not Christ at all, but doe despise and neglect all holy exercises. Others there be who doe seeke, but they do not continue seeking, they faint, they waxe wearie, and so giue ouer: because they feele not the quickning power of Christ euen at the first, or

after

after some short time, they doo euen relent and giue ouer. Let vs learne here of the spouse, not to giue ouer, let vs passe through all lets, dangers and inconueniencies, seeing in the end we shall not misse of him. Wee are often brought into doubte of the trueth in some points, because the sect masters and heretiques doo make such a shew of truth for their false opinions. We are also clogged with sinfull lustes, which do disquiet our myndes. Christ alone is to rid vs from all these feares, and though it seeme long often times before we can get out of them, yet in the ende wee finde deliuerance: for all that finde Christ, are freed from danger; and he that continueth to the ende, he shall be saued, Matth. 24. But now let euery one beware that they seeke the Lord in simplicitie and singlenes of heart: for such as are puffed vp with pride and vaine glorie, when they come vnto any knowledge, fall away againe: and many such there haue euer been. Of all others, a man would take them to bee the most earnest seekers after Christ: and in the ende, there is, euen the dogge to his vomite. They seemed to eschew the filthie pollutions of the world, with an exceeding great loathing and detestation, and suddainely they doo euen turne backe vnto them, and doo become ringleaders vnto sundry kindes of lewdnes. O wicked pride and vaineglorie, whether doest thou cast men? If they had while they did runne in the way, sought Christ in

singlenes

ſinglenes of heart, ſeeking in deede to bee ridde of their errors, and to haue all euill luſtes ſubdued in them, they ſhould not haue miſſed of him. Behold the cunning of the diuell, in ſetting them ſo on worke: for now if we call vpon men to be zealous and feruent in ſeeking the Lord, they can obiect, what is become of the vehement ſeeking of ſuch and ſuch men? O beloued, learne of the Church here, to continue ſtill our earneſt ſeeking, and learne by the feareful example of thoſe men, how good it is to ſeeke with humilitie, and with all lowlines of minde, not glorying in our ſelues, but in the Lord. Remember that admonition of the bleſſed Apoſtle, who ſaith, *With feare and trembling worke out your ſaluation: for it is God that worketh in you both the will and the deede, of his good pleaſure*, Phil. 2. 12, 13. Let vs be afraide of our owne affections which are crooked and peruerſe: let vs not leane vnto our own reaſon which is blinde; for if we doo, then ſhall we wilfullie and ſtiffely ſtand to maintaine our own opinions: we ſhall be readie to ſhew our wit in maintaining errors. Neither let vs delight to haue our owne will fulfilled, but be readie to denie it, that we may fulfill the holy will of the Lord. In a word, let vs feare and ſuſpect whatſoeuer is of our ſelues, and ſeeke to be wholly directed and guided by the ſpirite of the Lord. This is the true and the right ſeeking of Chriſt, and after this maner the holy ſpouſe ſeeketh him, and if we continue

nue thus seeking, we shall with her finde him at the last.

Now when shee had found him, what doth she then? She telleth vs here what she did. For marke her speech: *I* (saith she) *laide holde of him, and left him not, vntill I had brought him vnto my mothers house, into the chamber of her that conceiued me.* Christ is a most glorious king, is not this then ouer rude dealing, that she saith, she laide holde on him? May the faithfull vse this boldnes? Surely the laying holde on Christ is only by faith, which goeth not with any vnreuerend dealing, and the Lord is so far off from disalowing it, that it doth most highly please him. This is the merueilous kindenes of our Lord, which Satan would beare vs in hand by his ministers, (I meane the Papists) to be nothing so. O say they, it is ouer much sawcines, for sinful men to come directly vnto Christ, and to lay holde on him. It becommeth them in more humble maner to seeke vnto some that be inferiour, some Saint or Angell, which may speake for them. Yea, but doth the holy Church here so? No, no, shee seeketh onely after Christ, her minde is bent onelie vpon him, and vpon him directly she laieth hold with the hand of faith, and draweth him vnto her. And hee doth not condemne it in her as a rude part, but it is her praise and glorie, so to lay holde on Christ: and let not vs bee afraide in this pure sorte to lay holde on him: for you can no way so

highly

highly please the Lord, as by laying holde on him with a true and liuely faith. When the Church had sought him vpon her bed, but found him not: when she had also sought him about in ye streats of the citie, but found him not: now when she doth finde him, how earnestlie she laieth hold on him. Surely the Lorde doth withdraw himselfe sometime from the godly, and as it were hide himselfe, so that they doo not feele the comfort and peace in him that they would. Then doo they seeke him with care and griefe, then also missing of him, they see what it is to want him, and therefore so soone as euer he sheweth himselfe, they speedelie lay holde on him, as hauing found their onely treasure and felicitie. O how the faithfull run vnto Christ, and with what earnest desire they lay holde on him, that they may still be partakers of his sweete and precious comforts! Here also we may note the force and efficacie of the true and liuelie faith: how it doth not onely lay holde of the Lord, but also keepeth and retaineth him fast, and will not let him goe, for so bee her words. This is a very meruellous thing, that the almighty should be so held and retained, euen as it were with a violent force and power. But surely he hath by his couenant and promise, bound and tied himselfe vnto vs: so that whosoeuer laieth holde of the Lorde, with the hand of faith, it is vnpossible that hee should depart from them. This peraduenture will seeme hard vnto

some:

ſome: for it may be ſaid, ſhe hath holde on him, and will not let him goe, but if he would, could he not haue brake from her? Becauſe you ſay it is vnpoſſible that hee ſhould depart from them, that lay holde on him with the hand of faith. Let men conſider, that it is vnpoſſible that God ſhuld breake his couenant and promiſe, it is vtterly vnpoſſible that God ſhould lie. Well he hath promiſed, he hath couenanted and ſworne, that all which beleeue in his ſonne ſhall not be confounded. Whereby it is manifeſt, that Chriſt cannot departe from the ſoule which beleeueth aright in him: we are not to take theſe ſpeeches, as if Chriſt would depart from any that truſt in him: but onlie I doo note her ſpeech, when ſhe ſaith, that ſhe did lay hold on him, and would not let him goe, declaring with what force ſhe did holde and retaine him. What are we then more to ſeeke after then this ſame mightie hand of faith? *It is the rocke againſt which the gates of hell cannot preuaile*, as we may reade, Matth. 16. *It is the ſhield that quencheth all the fierie darts of the euill one*, Epheſ. 6. *It is* (as S. Iohn ſaith) *our victorie by which we ouercome the world*, 1. Iohn 5. Then it ſubdueth the prince of the world, it bringeth vnder all the power of the diuell. And as Iaakob did wreſtle with the Angell, and would not let him goe, and therefore hee called him Iſrael, ſaying, thou haſt power with God, thou ſhalt preuaile with men, Gene. 32. So all that beleeue, be true

Iſraelites,

Israelites, they lay hold vpon Christ by faith, they wrestle and preuaile with God. Great then is the praise and the glorie of faith, which if men did throughlie waie and consider, they would not be so colde and so careleſſe in ſeeking after it. They would not bee ſo negligent in reading and hearing of the holy word of God, with little or no meditation in the ſame. They would not be ſo fainte and feeble in prayer, but inſtantly they would call vpon the Lord to increaſe their faith, whereby they may thus preuaile by laying holde of Chriſt, and retaining him ſtill with them. O what labour ſhould we refuſe in this thing? How men doo labour and toile in the world for to get riches which are tranſitorie? Who is able to expreſſe their induſtrie and care, how they do beate their braines about it day and night? Would to God that we had but halfe ſo much care, and that we would in deede take but euen halfe ſo much paines to ſeeke after this rich and incomparable iewell of faith: this hand which laieth ſo faſt hold on Chriſt, ỹ it will not let him go. In deed the excellencie of it is in reſpect of him whom it holdeth. In Chriſt there is all fulnes of good things. *Whoſoeuer is in him, there is to them no condemnation*, Rom. 8. 1. They be moſt happie and bleſſed for euermore: then ſee what this hand obtaineth. On the other ſide, ſuch as be not in Chriſt, they be in their ſinnes, they be voide and deſtitute of all good things, they be vnder condemnation.

When Christ is laide open and publiſhed vnto them, ſo that in ſome ſorte they are made to ſee wherein all happines reſteth, where the onely remedie againſt all miſeries is, yet they are neuer the better, they haue no hand to lay hold of Chriſt, nor to retaine him, but they doo ſtill languiſh in their miſeries: for that is proper onely to the Church and her Children, which is here ſpoken, I laide holde on him, and left him not vntill I had brought him vnto my mothers houſe, into the chamber of her that conceiued me. Againe, here is an effectuall layiing holde on him by the bride, ſo that ſhe retaineth him to dwell with her for euer. For that is to be gathered by this, when ſhe bringeth him vnto her mothers houſe, and into the chambers of her that conceiued her. The faithfull ſoule is not contented, neither doth it ſatisfie her in ſome ſlight maner to lay holde on Chriſt for a time, but ſhe will leade him home, euen into the inner chamber, of her minde, that ſo he may dwell in her, and ſhe in him. Then ſhe liueth, or as the Apoſtle ſpeaketh, Chriſt liueth in her, Galath. 2. verſ. 20. The holy Ghoſt calleth vpon men *to open the gates and the euerlaſting dores*: that is, the dores of their heart, *and the king of glorie ſhall come in*, Pſalm. 24. She doth here open the gates and the dores, and leadeth him in. What good thing can be wanting where the King of glorie entreth in for to dwell? He is the Lorde of hoaſts who is ſtrong and mightie

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in battaile. He doth ſubdue ſinne, and putteth the prince of darkenes to flight, yea he chaſeth away all euill where hee dwelleth. No meruaile then, that ſhe will not let him goe, but leadeth him into the chambers of her that conceiued her. This is a great myſterie and a ſecret: for although men doe profeſſe the name of our Lord Ieſus Chriſt in word, yet for the moſt part they know not what this meaneth. They know not I ſay, what it is to bring Chriſt home into the chamber: he is in the heauens, a neerer preſence of him they doe neither feele nor make account of. Chriſt in deede is in their mouth, but the ſpirite of pride, of enuie, of ſelfeloue, of couetouſnes, of lecherie, and of all vncleanenes, yea euen the ſpirite and power of the diuell doth dwell in their heart. Their workes doo declare no leſſe; for all their filthie ſpeeches and wicked deedes doo manifeſtlie ſhew that they bee the children of that wicked one. As you may reade how our ſauiour doth reaſon againſt the Iewes, ſaying, *Ye doo the workes of your father, and you are of your father the diuell*, Iohn 8. And S. Iohn ſaith, *Be not deceiued, he that worketh righteouſnes, is righteous, as he is righteous, he that committeth ſinne is of the diuel*, 1. Iohn 3. verſ. 7, 8. If you will bee then the true children of the Church, lay holde on Chriſt, and bring him home into your hearts, that there his life and power may appeare. But as it was ſaide, here it may now bee demaunded, what mother

hath the Church? Who is ſhe that conceiued her? Is there any ſpouſe of Chriſt but one? I anſwer, there is but one Church, one myſticall bodie of Chriſt, and one ſpouſe: but alwaies that part of the Church which is vpon earth, is called ỹ daughter of the Church of former times. As we ſee how the generations paſſe away, and euermore there ariſe vp new, which for the time are as a young virgin, and daughter to the former. There is a continuall ſucceſſion, and the Church doth euermore bring forth vnto the Lord, ſo that euermore the Church here in the world may ſay, ſhe leadeth Chriſt into the chambers of her that conceiued her. And here is alſo to be noted, that ſhe leadeth him not vnto a ſtrange habitation, but vnto the ſame where her mother did entertaine him. For there is one faith, one hope, one doctrine, and therefore euery Church for the time vpon earth entertaineth Chriſt as her mother before her did. And in very deede, if you will approue your ſelues to be right Chriſtians, looke to the ſteps of the ancient Chriſtians, euen of the mother Churches vnder the Prophets and Apoſtles, and doo euen as they did.

And now ſee what followeth: *I charge you, O yee daughters of Ieruſalem, by the Roes and by the Hindes of the field, that yee ſtirre not vp, nor wake my loue vntill ſhe pleaſe.* I noted before, that it is doubtfull whether Chriſt or the Church did vtter this ſpeech: for the word (*loue*) is feminine,

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and so may be taken of Christ. In deede it seemeth in this place to be the speech of the bride: for hauing with long seeking found her welbeloued, and brought him home vnto her mothers house, she is much afraide least he should haue any occasion giuen vnto him to depart, or to withdraw himselfe from her: and therefore laieth this straight charge vpon her daughters, euen binding them with an oath, to beware least they awake and stirre him vp, before he please: For as I noted before in the other chapter, where we had this charge euen word for word, the daughters of Ierusalem are to take heed, least by their rude and vnreuerend behauiour, they cause the Lord for to depart: seeing that when he doth as it were hide himselfe from his Church, so that shee suffereth great affliction, it is for the euill behauiour of many which professe his name. The Lord giue vs his abundant grace, and make vs carefull to retaine him. Amen.

THE SIXT SERMON.

Chap. III.

6 *Who is ſhe that commeth vp out of the wildernes like pillars of ſmoake, perfumed with Mirrhe and Incenſe, and with all the ſpices of the Merchant.*

7 *Beholde his bed which is Salomons: three ſcore ſtrong men are round about it, of the valiant men of Iſrael.*

8 *They all handle the ſword, and are expert in warre, euery man hath his ſworde vpon his thigh, for the feare by night.*

9 *King Salomon made himſelfe a palace of the trees of Lebanon.*

10 *He made the pillars thereof of ſiluer, and the pauement thereof of golde, the hangings thereof of purple, whoſe middeſt was paued with the loue of the daughters of Ieruſalem.*

11 *Come forth ye daughters of Zion, and beholde the King Salomon with the crowne wherewith his mother crowned him in the daye of his mariage.*

mariage, and in the day of the gladnes of his heart.

THe Church ſought Chriſt, and neuer gaue ouer ſeeking vntill ſhee had found him, and brought him home vnto her mothers houſe, into the chambers of her that conceiued her. Chriſt in deede ſheweth himſelfe preſent vnto his deere ſpouſe here below, but not that ſhee is to make account that his ſpeciall abode with her, is here on earth, but that ſhee muſt aſcend vp vnto his houſe, euen vnto the chambers of the heauenlie palace, for to that ende and purpoſe doth hee come downe vnto her. Here therefore is ſhewed the effect of this her finding and laying holde of him, namely that he hath perfumed her with his ſweete graces, and made her fit and meete to aſcend vp with him vnto his royall palace which is here deſcribed. Come then vnto the wordes, *Who is ſhee that aſcendeth vp out of the wildernes, &c.* The bridegrome (as it ſeemeth) doth vtter this ſpeech, not being ignorant, or hauing the leaſt doubte who ſhee is, but in way of admiration or wonderment, to draw vs to the due conſideration of the greatnes and excellencie of the thing. It is no ſmall worke that the bride, euen the whole companie of the faithfull doo in heart and minde aſcend vp into the heauens. Our affections, and all the powers of our

minde are wholly of themselues bent downward to this world, euen to the earth & earthly things. It is Christ then that maketh her to ascend vp out of the wilderneſſe: it is the mightie power and operation of his grace. For marke how when she had so earneſtly sought after him, when at the last she had found him, when she had layd holde on him, and would not let him goe vntill she had brought him vnto her mothers house, and euen into the chambers, how it followeth by and by, who is this that ascendeth vp out of the wilderness? This is it that I said, Christ commeth down vnto his spouse here on earth, that hee may cause her to mount vp into the heauens, which wee see dooth follow: such is the power and effectuall working of his grace. But what is the wildernes out of which shee ascendeth? It is the world, euen the corrupt and miserable estate that wee are all in by nature. In a wildernesse there is no tilling, no sowing, no planting, no dressing, no good fruite: but all lieth waste, barren and desolate. Euen so is it with all mankinde, by nature there is nothing but barrennes. God planteth, tilleth and dresseth his Church, she is (as S. Paul saith, 1. Cor. 3.) Gods husbandrie, she is made fruitfull to the Lorde: but the whole world beside, out of which she ascendeth, dooth remaine as a most desolate and barren wilderneſſe. There groweth not in it any one sweete thing at all, but all noysome stinking

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and abominable weedes. All the godly, which are heere represented vnder the person of the spouse, doe ascend out of this barren gulfe. And the worke is wonderfull and marueilous: but especially if you marke how she ascendeth vp. It is said, *euen like pillars of smoke*. What meaneth this? That must you gather by the words that follow, which are these, *perfumed with myrrhe and incense, and with all the spices of the merchant*: or as it may rightly be translated, more excellent then all the dust of the merchant. The godly do not while they liue here ascend vp in bodie into the heauens: but their faith, their hope, their loue, their prayers and thanksgiuing, with such like, doe like pillars of smoke of sweete incense, ascend vp before the Lord: and all these pillars of smoke of sweete odors arise from hence, that Christ hath perfumed her with the heauenly graces of his spirit, which he calleth myrrhe and incense, which he sayth doth excell all the dust, that is to say, al the sweet spices of the merchant. She is then perfumed with the graces of Christ, and so made sweete and fit to ascend vp to God in the heauens. She ascendeth vp out of a wildernes, where no good nor sweete thing groweth, and yet she aboundeth with al sweete perfumes, which ascend vp euen like vnto pillars of smoke. Is not this a wonderfull thing? From whence hath she these sweete fruites in the wildernesse? Euen as I told you before, she fought him whom

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her ſoule loueth, yea ſhe neuer gaue ouer ſeeking vntill ſhe had found him, ſhe layd hold on him, and would not let him depart: and heere is the fruite of her labour, hee perfumeth her with all ſweete and precious things, and maketh her fit for to aſcend vp into the heauens. O beloued, ſhall not this inflame our mindes to ſeeke after Chriſt, and neuer to giue ouer for any trauaile, inconuenience or danger, vntill wee finde him? Yea to lay faſt holde on him, and to retaine him, that hee may thus perfume vs with his ſpirit and gracious giſts, and ſo make vs fit to dwell with him in the heauens? In our ſelues, and of our own nature, we ſtinke, we are loathſome and abominable, fit for the ſtinking pit of hel, and not meet for to aſcend vp into the heauenly palaces. If we finde him, and as the holy ſpouſe ſaith, lay holde on him, and retaine him, he wil indeede perfume vs, and make vs full of all ſweete things, through which we ſhall be acceptable vnto God. They are worthie to lie and rot in their filthines, and ſo with deteſtation to be caſt out of the preſence of the Lord, who will not ſeeke vp ſo ſweet and gracious a Sauiour. What is the cauſe that men generally are ſo addicted vnto this world, ſo that they doe not aſcend vp out of it? And what is the reaſon that they bee not perfumed with ſweete things, but doe caſt forth continually the ſtinke of vncleane and abominable vices? Surely men this, they doe not with the holy bride ariſe

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out of their bed to seeke Christ, and neuer ceasse vntill they haue found him. No, no, there is small and colde seeking after him. I would to God it might enter into our mindes, and bee throughly fixed in vs, what a treasure we shal obtaine, when we finde him. Some will replie, that they seeke him, but they cannot finde those things which the spouse here found. It may be (say they) Christ will not bee found of all that seeke him. They could be content for to seeke him more earnestly, if they were sure that they should finde him. Surely this is the tempter, this is our owne negligence and vnbeleefe, and it is very good for vs to beware of it. Wee see what wonderfull goodly things they attaine vnto, which finde Christ, laying hold on him, and not leauing him. We see also by the speeches of the spouse, that hee is not easily found. If we seeke a little and in colde maner, euen as it were vpon our bed; because wee finde him not, we are readie to imagine, and the diuell doth also suggest, that it is but lost labour for to seeke him. But doubtles all that seeke him in vprightnes of heart, and that seeke him diligently and carefully, not giuing ouer, shall finde him. Is it not his promise, *Seeke and you shall finde, aske and you shall receiue, knocke and it shall be opened vnto you? For whosoeuer asketh receiueth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* Matth. 7. 7. &c. If therefore we haue sought, and yet finde not that

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we are perfumed with myrrhe and incenſe, ſweeter then all the ſpices of the merchant, and that we doe aſcend vp out of this barren wilderneſſe, let vs know that we haue not ſought ſo feruently as we ought to ſeeke: let vs then bee more diligent.

It followeth, *Beholde his bed which is Salomons: threeſcore ſtrong men are round about it of the valiant men of Iſrael. They all handle the ſword, and are expert in warre: euery man hath his ſword vpon his thigh for the feare by night.* It was ſayd in the former verſe, that ſhe aſcended vp out of the wilderneſſe. And whither doth ſhe aſcend, but vnto the habitation of the great king her ſpouſe, to lodge and to dwell with him for euer? Here is therfore vnder a ſhadow, a deſcription of that heauenly lodging. The ſhadow is taken from the bride bed, and from the bride chamber of king Salomon. For Chriſt is the true Salomon, euen the king of peace, of whom Salomon that wrote this Song was a figure. It was and is the maner, that kings haue euery night a watch about their lodging by part of their gard, that there bee no treaſon wrought, but that the king may ſleepe without feare. It ſeemeth by this place, that king Salomon had euery night threeſcore valiant men of his garde, expert in battell, and with their ſwords girded to their thigh, that did keepe the watch, that ſo hee might ſleepe in ſafetie. And becauſe it falleth out ſometimes that

treacheries bee committed by some that are put in trust to watch and to garde: here is mention made that these are of the valiant men of Israel, they bee true hearted and trustie. Needfull it is that they should be no weake ones, nor no cowardly persons: and more needfull it is also, that they should be in a readines and haue their weapons prepared, and most needfull of all, that they bee such as will not bee corrupted any way, but haue faithfull hearts. If they were mightie and valiant men, and right well appointed, and not of the valiant men of Israel, that is to say, found and true hearted, the daunger were the greater. But Salomons bed is safely garded with these valiant men of Israel: whereby is figured, how safely from all danger and feare, the Church shal rest with Christ in the heauens. Here be many enemies which seeke to destroy the Church. Satan the prince of darknes with all his angels, & with all the infernall powers, waiteth day and night to worke all the mischiefe that he can. He raiseth vp cruell and bloody tyrants, which breath out threatnings and terror, as if they would vtterly separate her from Christ. But when the faithfull haue found Christ, and hee hath so replenished them with the gifts and graces of his spirit, that they mount vp into the heauens by a true and liuely faith, with feruent loue and vehement affection: then howsoeuer they bee troubled, molested, afflicted, and disquieted here in the world,

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yet they reſt ſafe and in peace with him aboue. That place is ſafely garded, thither can no enemy approach to worke any miſchiefe, or to put the ſpouſe in any feare. He, euen that heauenly Salomon, is garded with his mightie Angels, which are miniſtring ſpirits, ſent foorth to miniſter for their ſakes which ſhall inherite ſaluation. Heb. 1. Theſe bee true Iſraelites indeede, holy and faithfull: no vnfaithfulnes can come neere vnto them. Let vs therefore touching this point remember theſe wordes of our Sauiour vnto his Apoſtles, when hee was euen readie to depart from them out of this world, ſaying, *Theſe things haue I ſpoken vnto you, that in me you may haue peace, in the world you ſhall haue affliction: but be of good comfort, for I haue ouercome the world.* Iohn. 16. verſ. 33. Then howſoeuer the caſe dooth ſtand with the godly here in the world, they reſt in ſafetie and peace with Chriſt. But this is not al which the bride ſhall obtaine, by her aſcending vp out of the wilderneſſe vnto the palace of her welbeloued: for it falleth out that one may dwell ſafe from danger, and bee well garded in a place of ſmall eaſe and pleaſure: marke therefore what a deſcription now followeth of the heauenly bride chamber: how rich, how goodly and precious it is to dwell in. For here it is figured by king Salomons bride chamber. *King Salomon made himſelfe* (ſaith our Engliſh tranſlation) *a palace of the trees of Lebanon.* Some take it to

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be a Coach in which hee was carried with his Queene. The word is *apirion*, which is not found elsewhere in all the holie Scriptures. It is deriued of *Parah*, which signifieth to flourish and bring forth fruite. So that most fitly it may be here taken for a royall and sumptuous bride chamber, which king Salomon built in his owne palace. This bride chamber (which was for the daughter of Pharaoh king of Egypt, whom Salomon maried, and for whom hee built an house, as the holy Scripture doth witnes, 1. King. 9. vers. 24.) touching the timber, was of the trees of Lebanon, that is of goodly Cedars: for Lebanon in the Scriptures is renowmed for Cedars. That kinde of wood is very durable. Then it is sayd, that *the pillars were of siluer, and the pauement of gold, and the hangings of purple*: Here is a goodly rich thing, and pleasant to lodge in. And then it is added further: *whose middest was paued with the loue of the daughters of Ierusalem.* This is more darke to bee vnderstood then the rest. The middest is to bee taken for the inward parts of this chamber which were paued with loue, that is, as we may vnderstand it, wrought with louely or most excellent workes, by the daughters of Ierusalem. For so I take it this latter clause is most fitly to bee translated, rather then to say of the daughters of Ierusalem. For hee speaketh of the excellent needle workes of the stuffe and furniture, which the skilfullest needle women in Ierusalem

rusalem had wrought. Heere then are all things rich and sumptuous, yea these things are rare and excellent euen among the greatest princes of the world. For the glorie of king Salomon did much excell, hee being a figure of the heauenly king of glorie our Lord Iesus Christ: but they are scarce worthie to bee named or esteemed to bee a shadow of that heauenly palace, which is here resembled by them. For what are buildings of Cedar? what is siluer and gold or purple? yea what are all the finest needle workes vnto that heauenly habitation of Christ, in which his Church shall dwell with him for euer? Wee see also how the new Ierusalem, the citie of God, is shewed vnto S. Iohn in a vision, Reuel. 21: and there described to bee most rich and precious, as being of most pure golde shining through like Chrystall, and of pearle. Then besides the safetie that the godly shall rest in with Christ, where no aduerse power shall approch any way to hurt or annoy them, their dwelling shall be also most delectable and glorious. True it is that Salomons Queene did dwell in a palace very goodly and sumptuous, & such as the very kings and princes of the earth might euen wonder at: so great was the glorie and royaltie which his God gaue him. But yet the same palace that she dwelt in, and all her glory, was nothing to the palace which Christ hath prepared for his beloued spouse, the Church. Then is there sufficient cause to moue all the chil-

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dren of God to ascend vp out of this wildernes, vnto this heauenly palace. And aboue all things, let vs marke this well, into what maner of place, and vnto what maner of person we must ascend vp vnto: for that will put vs in minde, what maner of persons we ought to be: vncleane persons are not meete to enter and dwell in such a palace. As it is written, *There shall enter into it no vncleane thing, neither whatsoeuer worketh abomination or lie*, Reu. 21. 27. And iudge in your selues, are the vnholy & stinke in their wickednes, in any sorte to be ioyned vnto the Lord Iesus Christ? No verely brethren, al that shal dwel with him, must be sweete and cleane. And therefore marke how the spouse is said *to ascend vp out of the wildernes, perfumed with Myrrhe and Incense, sweeter then all the spices of the Merchant.* She is decked and made sweete, to goe dwell in such a place, and with such a person. O Lord, how little is this regarded? It doth please men well, to heare that the heauenly habitation is prepared, and that the godly shall there dwell with Christ their king, in euerlasting glorie. And some speeches they cast forth, expressing a desire to come to the same: but where are they almost, which seeke to be perfumed and made sweete and fit to goe vp thether? Doo not many which professe that they hope to goe thether, and to dwell with the Lord of glorie, yet still continue in their vncleanenes, and doo not seeke to purge themselues, and to bee

perfumed with the ſweete graces of the holy Ghoſt? Theſe ſay that they looke for the life to come: but I pray you, can it be ſaid of them, that they aſcend vp perfumed with Myrrhe and Incenſe? There are none that aſcend vp to heauen, but they that are ſweete. Such filthie ſlouens, are fit to dwell in the ſtinking dungeon of hell, and thether they ſhall be thruſt, vnles they repent and alter their maners.

Now let vs come to the laſt verſe of this chapter, which is in theſe words: *Come forth ye daughters of Zion, and beholde the king Salomon with the crowne, wherewith his mother crowned him, in the day of his mariage, and in the day of the gladnes of his heart.* Firſt, it is not eaſie to proue or to ſhew for certainty, who vttereth this ſpeech. We ſee it is directed vnto the daughters of Zion: the ſumme of it is to incite them to come forth, and to beholde the glorie of king Salomon; and by king Salomon is meant the Lord Ieſus: he is the true Salomon, he is the king of peace. It is then his crowne & his glorie, which theſe daughters of Zion are willed to come forth and behold. It is not like then that Chriſt vttereth this but rather we may take it to be the ſpeech of the church vnto all her daughters: here may ariſe another doubte. Is Chriſt this king Salomon, that is crowned with honour and glorie in the day of his mariage? Is he crowned by his mother? Who is this his mother? And how doth ſhe ſet this crowne

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vpon his head? And when was he maried? True it is that the holie scriptures doo set forth that Christ is as yet but betrothed, and that, as we haue shewed before, the day of his mariage shall be at the last day, euen at the end of this world. How then are they willed to beholde that glorie before it come? I answer that the words may be translated more rightly, thus, *in the day of his betrothing*: but if we will take it as it is translated, *in the day of his mariage*, yee must knowe, that faith beholdeth things inuisible, and things to come. And touching this question, who is that his mother that doth crowne him? Or let it be that the mother of king Salomon did in the day that hee was betrothed, or when the mariage day was, set a crowne vpon his head, yet this we know, that it is *God that crowneth Iesus with honor and glorie*, as we reade Psalm. 8. and Hebr. 2. 9. It is most true that God hath aduanced Iesus Christ, and set the crowne of glorie vpon him: that is out of controuersie: and yet withal his mother doth also after a sort set the crowne of glory vpon his head. *Seeing the Church is the fulnes of him that filleth all in all*, Ephes. 1. vers. 23. The Church doth honor and glorifie Christ: and the Church sometimes is set forth to be the mother of Christ, Reu. 12. But to let passe these things, let vs consider that which is the chiefe and principall matter in this sentence, how wee are called vpon to come forth, and to behold the glorie of Christ. For all

the faithfull soules be the daughters of Zion. And looke how the daughters of Ierusalem, sitting or remaining in their houses, in their chambers and closets, could not beholde the glorie of king Salomon, and therefore they bee willed to come forth of their dores: euen so, if we will beholde the great king in his most excellent glorie, wee must come out of our dores, we must come out of our selues, otherwise we cannot see his glory. We are in our selues shut vp in a darke dungeon, we are called vpon to come forth into the cleere light of faith, and to remoue away those thicke walles of the flesh, which are betweene our sight and Christ. Most true it is, that whosoeuer doo not come forth of themselues, but will seeke Christ in their owne reason, and carnall imaginations, they cannot beholde his glorie. This is a matter of great importance, and by no meanes to bee neglected: for if you haue a desire to bee drawne out of this vaine world, in our affections and desires: then are we to goe forth, and to beholde the glorie of Christ: for what can moue or draw vs more then this, when we beholde the greatnes of his glorie, and consider withall, that he is crowned therewith, euen to this ende, that we may be partakers with him in the same. You see then, that it is vnto speciall purpose, that we are called vpon to come forth, and with the eyes of faith, to beholde in daylie meditation, the glorie of Christ Iesus, in which his Church shall

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raigne with him. If we doo this, we ſhall eaſilie deſpiſe all the glorie and pleaſures of this world, as droſſe, Our Lord worke it in vs. Amen.

THE SEVENTH SERMON.

CHAP. IIII.

1 *Beholde thou art faire, my loue, behold thou art faire, thine eyes are as the doues: among thy lockes, thine hayre is like the flocke of goates which loike downe from the mountaine of Gilead.*

2 *Thy teeth are like a flocke of ſheepe in good order, which goe vp from the waſhing, which euery one bring out twinnes, and none is barren among them.*

3 *Thy lippes are like a thread of ſcarlet, and thy talke is comelie: thy temples are within thy lockes, as a peece of a pomegranate.*

4 *Thy necke is as the tower of Dauid, built for defence a thouſand ſhields hang therein, euen all the targets of the mightie men.*

5 *Thy two breſts are as two young rods that are twinnes, feeding among the lilies.*

6 *Vntill the day breake, and the ſhadowes flie*

away, I will goe to the mountaine of Myrrhe, and to the mountaine of Incense.

7 Thou art all faire my loue, and there is no spot in thee.

8 Come with me from Lebanon my spouse, come with me from Lebanon, looke from the top of Amanah, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the dens of the Lions, and from the mountaines of the Leopards.

THIS chapter, euen all the whole, except two verses, the 15. and 16. is the speech of the bridegrome, consisting in praises and commendations of the bride, in declaration of his loue towards her, and in promises made vnto her. These three things be exceeding comfortable, and may in deede, if we be not too too dull, euen glad our hearts. For consider that he is the king of glorie, and who is able to set forth the excellencie of his beautie? Shall it not then seeme a great thing vnto vs, that he being in the very top and height of all glorie, doth so admire ỹ beauty of the Church, is so greatly delighted with it, and promiseth to take her into his presence? This will appeare more in the particulars: thus he beginneth to praise her beautie, *Beholde thou art faire, my loue, beholde thou art faire.* This is generall commendation,

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and that which followeth, is a praiſe by ſeuerall and particular parts. How great and excellent the beautie is of the whole Church, and ſo of euery faithfull ſoule, doth appeare by this, that hee doth as it were wonder thereat, and repeateth and doubleth his ſpeech, *Behelde thou art faire my loue, beholde thou art faire.* For when the ſcripture ſaith *beholde*, it noteth for the moſt part, a thing to be wondred at, and the doubling of the ſpeech doth augment the matter. But here lieth the chiefe thing to be conſidered, that ſuch an one as our Lord Ieſus doth wonder at her beautie. Such as bee brought vp in a poore, baſe, and beggarly condition, if they chaunce to ſee one in goodly rich attire, doo woonder thereat. But let the ſame perſon ſo richly decked, come into the preſence of a glorious Emperour, and hee doth not woonder, vnles in deede the decking be exceeding great. The poore and of meane eſtate, may woonder at a little: but he cannot. Euen ſo may you conſider it in our Lord Ieſus Chriſt, for he dwelleth in glorie and beautie vnſpeakeable, and yet as it were, wondereth at the beautie of his ſpouſe: which is a full declaration, that her beautie excelleth. What ſhould more inflame our hearts vnto vertue and true godlines, then this, that it maketh men ſo faire and precious in the eyes of the Lord? But whence hath the ſpouſe this beautie? I neede not ſtand to ſhew againe, that he of one that was fowle ſtincking and de-

formed, hath made her cleane, sweete, and beautifull: for all her beautie is from him. It will further be obiected, that this is spoken of the Church militant vpon earth, in which euen the perfectest haue great deformities: how then can he say, *Behold thou art faire my loue, behold thou art faire?* I answer that the Lord beholdeth his spouse, not in herselfe, but in himselfe, that is washed, iustified, sanctified, decked and clothed with his graces. Thus much touching the generall commendation: now to that which is by the particular parts: first, we are to remember, that all the true beleeuers are knit together by one spirite, and doo make one mysticall bodie in Christ Iesus, 1. Cor. 12. vers. 13. So then as there be in the naturall bodie of a man, diuers members, which according to their seuerall gifts, haue diuers functions and operations: the holy Ghost ascribeth the like to the mysticall bodie, as S. Paul setteth forth at large, 1. Cor. 12. Then further wee are to obserue, that those are of right singular beautie which are beautifull and comelie in all parts. If one part be comelie and another deformed, then there is not perfect beautie. But the Church iustified and sanctified in Christ, is glorious in all parts. Our Sauiour here doth begin with the eies, saying, *thine eyes are as the doues*: as much as to say, thine eyes are like to the eyes of the doues. Of all parts in the humane bodie, if the face bee not comelie, beautifull and well fauoured, there is

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little or no reckoning made. And of all parts in the face, the eyes are a principall ornament if they bee beautifull, and a chiefe deformitie to the whole, if they bee not. Now the eyes of the Church are here commended, by comparing them to the eyes of the doues, which are chaſte, ſimple, and very beautifull to looke vpon. What ſhall we take theſe eyes to be? It ſhould ſeeme by Saint Paul, 1. Cor. 12. that the paſtors and teachers are the eyes in the Church, for they are to giue light to the whole bodie, through the heauenly and pure doctrine, and ſo it may be taken here: but I take it rather in this place, that the eyes are a true and liuelie faith in all the godlie: for by faith we looke vp to the Lord, and beholde things inuiſible. Doubtles this eye of faith is ſimple, it is chaſte, it is very beautifull and precious in Gods ſight. *Without faith it is vnpoſſible to pleaſe God*, as it is written, Hebr. 11. ver. 6. Let vs ſtudie and labour then, by all poſſible meanes to get this precious iewell, and euen to be rich in it. Would you not be glad to caſt vp ſuch an eye to the Lord, as he may be delighted with all, as with an eye that is ſimple, chaſte, and beautifull?

The next clauſe is in theſe words, *among thy lockes*, which is expounded diuerſly. For ſome doe take it to ſignifie that the locks of haire hang downe ſo as the eyes doe appeare from within them. And other are of this minde, that he ſayth,

beſide

beside thy lockes, or as it were thy lockes remoued Howsoeuer it is, this is most certaine, that according to the maner of the attyre which the chast virgins did vse about their haire for modestie and comelines, the bride is here commended. Then he addeth, *thy haire is like a flocke of goates, which locke downe from mount Gilead.* It is taken that by the haire, are meant the multitude of the faithfull, especially when they be assembled to heare the word, and other holy exercises of religion. And it is fitly resembled by a flocke of goates feeding vpon mount Gilead. That mountaine was fruitfull with holesome pasture, and a goodly sight it was to behold a flock of goates spread all abroad and feeding thereupon. Where the Lords people are assembled and are fed with the heauenly foode, it is in his eyes a goodly and a comely thing: also happie are they who with the chosen doe assemble vpon his holy mountaine, and there taste of the spirituall foode to the satisfying of their soules.

In the next place he commendeth the teeth, saying, *Thy teeth are like a flocke of sheep in good order*, or rather, which are equall, *which goe vp from the washing, which euery one bring out twinnes, and none is barren among them.* Touching the teeth in the naturall bodie, the comelines and beautie of them is in these three things: first that they be euen or of equall length and bignes: secondly, that they be white and cleane: thirdly, that

that each row answer fitly to the other, and none be wanting. To set foorth these things, they bee likened to a flocke of sheepe which be of equall stature, or of an euen bignes: that is for the first. Then that they come vp from the washing, so that being euen newly washed, they bee white and cleane: that is the second. In the last place, as twinnes are answerable one to the other, so in the two rowes euery tooth meeteth fit with another, and so there is no gap, there is none wanting. Now it may bee demaunded, what are the teeth of the holy Church? To answere this, wee must consider, that the Lord giueth a spirituall foode to his Church, which euery faithfull soule feedeth vpon. This foode is the Lord Iesus himselfe: *he is the bread of life that came down from heauen.* Iohn 6. And because hee is fed vpon through faith, *and faith commeth by hearing of the word.* Rom. 10. The holy word of God is also called the foode of our soules: for Saint Peter calleth it the *sincere milke, which he willeth vs to couet as new borne babes, that we may grow therby.* 1. Pet. 2. vers. 1. And S. Paul telleth the Corinths, that *they were carnal, euen babes in Christ, and that he gaue them milke to drinke, and not strong meate.* 1. Cor. 3. Where wee may see that the word of God, for the diuers maner of the deliuering of it, is milke, and it is strong meate. Hereupon the teachers are called pastors, that is to say, feeders of the flockes. Now by the teeth

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of the Church we may very wel vnderſtand thoſe graces which are giuen vnto euery faithful ſoule, by which the ſoule hath power to feede vpon the word, and vpon Chriſt. Or by the teeth may wel bee vnderſtood the godly and faithfull paſtors, who as S. Paul ſpeaketh, *doe cut and deuide the word of trueth aright vnto the people.*

It followeth: *Thy lips are like a threed of skarlet.* Here are two things commended in the lips, as that they bee ſmall, which is reſembled by a thred, and that they be of red colour, and therfore he mentioneth skarlet. And if a virgin bee neuer ſo beautifull, if her ſpeech bee rude and vnpleaſant, it diſgraceth all: therefore hee addeth, *thy ſpeech is comely.* The ſpeech of man declareth what is in the heart: for our Sauiour ſaith, *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh.* And a good man out of the good treaſure of his heart bringeth foorth good things: and an euill man out of the euil treaſure of his heart bringeth forth euill things. By nature there is nothing in mans heart but that which is corrupt and abominable, and ſo in all men, as the Apoſtle ſayth, *the poyſon of Aſpes is vnder their lips.* Rom. 3. But by the operation of the holy ſpirit, the hearts of the faithfull are repleniſhed with faith, with loue, with zeale, and with many goodly vertues, and then the ſpeech is according. Wherefore he ſaith, *thy ſpeech is comely.* Let men conſider this well: for many men make ſmall reckoning of

ſpeech.

ſpeech. Words ſay they (when they vtter all the vanitie and filthines of their mind) are no harme. Tell them that men ſhall giue an account at the day of iudgement for euery idle word, and they will ieſtingly anſwer, that God hath greater matters to looke after, then to take account of idle words. Let theſe alone in their filthines, it behoueth euery one that will bee acceptable to Chriſt, and beautifull in his eyes, to haue comelie ſpeech. Then he addeth, *Thy temples are within thy lockes, as a peece of a pomegranate.* This is to bee vnderſtoode both of the temples and of the cheekes, and their beautie is commended, that together with the faire white, there is a mixture of red. That hee ſaith, *within thy lockes*, it is the ſame word which he vſed before about the eyes. And as I noted, it is taken diuerſly. Either that the lockes did hang vpon the temples, and ſo to take it that they bee within the lockes: or from within the lockes, that is, the lockes being remoued. Howſoeuer it is, as I ſaid before, this is certaine that the modeſtie, the chaſte and comely maner of wearing the locks is here commended.

In the next place hee commeth to the necke, ſaying, *Thy neck is like the tower of Dauid built for defence, a thouſand ſhields hang therein, euen all the targets of the mightie men.* It dooth appeare plainly by this place, that king Dauid built a tower in Ieruſalem for an Armorie: it is tranſlated in our Engliſh, for defence: but the word

doth

doth signifie, for the hanging vp of sharpe weapons, or weapons that had edge. And therefore is most fitly to bee called an Armorie. Also that which followeth maketh the matter cleere, that he saith, *a thousand shields hang therein, euen all the targets of the mightie men.* Then in this towel were layd vp the chiefe weapons of warre, vntill such time as there should be vse for them. Vnto this tower dooth the Lord compare the necke of his Church. It is long, straight, and furnished with goodly things. To applie this vnto some seuerall persons or functions in the Church, I will not curiously stand: but besides the beautie and stately comelines. I take it here is meant the force and power of the whole armour of God, which the holy Apostle setteth forth Eph. 6 which indeed the Lord doth arme all the faithful withall, that they may be able to stand against all the assaults of the diuell. The shields and targets of the valiant men of Israel were in that tower of Dauid: but in the Church is the armour and power of the mightie God.

Now to the breasts: *Thy two breasts* (saith he) *are like two yong roes that are twins, feeding among the lillies.* The breasts in a woman are for to nourish the infants which she bringeth forth. And the Church is the mother of all Gods children, when they be regenerate she dooth nurse them vp: and for that cause there are two breasts ascribed vnto her. Most certaine it is, that whosoeuer

ſoeuer will grow vp in the Lord, hee muſt ſucke his ſpirituall nouriſhment from theſe breaſts. They bee here highly commended, as to bee like vnto two yong roes that be twinnes. They bee like one another, they be full of very ſweete nouriſhment, as roes that feede in a pleaſant paſture. Theſe breaſts of the Church are ſaid by interpretors, to bee the two Teſtaments of the Lord, the olde and the new. And very agreeable to trueth it is ſo to take them, ſeeing the Church dooth not bring forth any children to God, nor nouriſh thē with her owne doctrine, but with the moſt ſweet and holeſome doctrine of the Lord. The two Teſtaments indeede, the olde and the new, may very well be compared vnto twinnes, they agree, they both ſet foorth one heauenly doctrine, the one confirmeth the other. If any man will obiect and ſay, theſe doe containe the counſell and will of God, it is onely the doctrine of the Lord which they ſet forth, how then can they be called the breaſts of the Church? I anſwer, that the like may be obiected touching any one thing which is praiſed in her, for all that is beautifull and excellent in her, is of grace, and freely beſtowed vpon her by Chriſt. All the holie bookes then of the olde Teſtament and of the new, euen the writings of the Prophets and Apoſtles, are the two breaſts of the Church: and from them onely we muſt ſuck the ſincere milk of the word by which we are to grow. Thus farre the Lord hath commended

mended his ſpouſe by ſeuerall parts, not proſecuting euery particular, but adding in the next verſe, ſauing one that *ſhe is all faire, and no ſpot in her*, which we will handle when wee come vnto it. Now to that which followeth next: *Vntill the day breake, and the ſhadowes flie away, I will go to the mountaine of myrrhe, and to the mountaine of incenſe.* Wee haue in the ende of the ſecond chapter ſhewed what day it is which is ſpoken of, when he ſaith, *vntill the day breake:* for there the ſpouſe did intreate her welbeloued, that vntill the day breake, and the ſhadowes flie away, he would returne and bee like a yong roe vpon the mountaines of Bether. And here the bridegrome ſeemeth to anſwer vnto her requeſt. It may bee referred (as I ſayd) to the time of Chriſts comming in the fleſh, when as indeede all the ſhadowes of the Law did vaniſh and flie away: but more fitly to the great day of the generall iudgement, when as indeede all the ſhadowes, euen all errors, and all calamities ſhall vtterly vaniſh for euer, and the Church ſhall liue in glorious light, world without end. Now that he ſaith, he will vntill that day goe to the mountaine of myrrhe, and to the mountain of incenſe, it may be taken two wayes. Firſt, the heauens are the holy mountaine of the Lord, and there the praiſe and honour which the bleſſed Angels and ſpirits of the iuſt doe glorifie him withall, is as ſweete incenſe and precious myrrhe. So that the

heauens

heauens may very well be called the mountaine of myrrhe, and the mountaine of incenſe. If wee take it ſo, then it reſpecteth his aſcending into the heauens, (as he tolde his diſciples) to prepare a place, where he muſt (as S. Peter ſheweth) remaine vntil the time of the reſtoring of al things. And then will he come downe to fetch all his choſen, that where he is, there alſo they may bee. Then the ſecond way is, that the mountaine of myrrhe, &c. may bee taken for the Church militant vpon earth, which is often called the mountaine of the Lord. And very well it may bee called the mountaine of myrrhe, and the mountaine of incenſe, becauſe there bee the ſweete prayers and praiſes of God offered vp, through the mediation of Ieſus Chriſt. And of this mountaine he ſayth, *Behold I am with you vnto the ende of the world.* Matth. 28. For albeit our Lord is in the heauens, yet is he preſent with his Church vpon earth, highly eſteeming the faithfull and ſincere worſhip and ſeruice of his people. For this cauſe he appeared in viſion to S. Iohn, Reuel. 1. in the middeſt of the ſeuen golden Candleſtickes, holding the ſeuen ſtarres in his right hand. The Church of Rome, as if he were abſent, hath ſet vp one to bee his vicar, to execute his office, euen to giue remiſſion of ſins, & life euerlaſting vnto all men. This is Antichriſt that taketh vpon him to bee in Chriſts ſtead. But the godly doe by faith finde and feele the preſence of the Lorde, they

dwell in him and he in them: they need not, hauing the fountaine it selfe of liuing waters, seeke to those stinking puddles.

It followeth: *Thou art al faire my loue, & there is no spot in thee.* Here is a very great praise giuen to the bride, that her beautie is absolute and perfect throughout all parts of her, and that there is no spot or blemish at all. From hence as it seemeth, S. Paul draweth his speech, when he sayth, that *Christ gaue himselfe for his Church, that he might sanctifie it, and clense it by the washing of water through the word. That he might make it vnto himselfe a glorious Church, not hauing spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holie and without blame.* Ephes. 5. ver. 25. 26. 27. How shall the Church make any doubt but that she is loued of God, when she is become thus glorious and pure, as not to haue in any part so much as the least spot or wrinkle of deformitie? For that one word (*mum*) which the bridegrome here vseth in the Hebrew text, which is vsually expounded, *a spot*, S. Paul expresseth by al these, spot, wrinkle, or any such thing. Then wee see that although the bridegrome did not goe through all particular parts of his spouse, to giue them their seuerall commendation, as he did in diuers, yet he ascribeth a full perfection of beautie vnto them al, when he sayth, *Thou art al faire my loue, and there is no spot in thee.* Such a glorious mysticall bodie is meete to be ioyned with

so

ſo glorious a head: and if there were any deformitie remaining, how could it bee vnited vnto him? But here it will bee ſayd, how agreeth this with her owne ſpeech in the firſt chapter, where ſhe ſayth, *I am blacke, but yet comely, and that ſhe is ſunne-burnt?* And how doth it agree with all thoſe places of holy Scripture which teſtifie ſo plainly, that all the faithfull while they liue here, be full of ſpots and deformities? I haue anſwered this before, namely, that men muſt not conſider or eſteeme the Church as ſhe is in her ſelfe, or as ſhe is here in the world: but we muſt behold her in Chriſt, iuſtified and fully ſanctified in him, and as ſhe ſhall be at the day of mariage, when her whole trimming and decking ſhall be put on. And therefore thoſe Heretikes and Schiſmatikes, which from theſe places haue drawne their ſtrong imagination, touching the full puritie of the Church while ſhe is vpon earth, and ſo haue condemned the true Church for her imperfections and ſinnes, are much deceiued. It may be ſayd then, why doth not the Lord then rather ſay to his ſpouſe, thou ſhalt bee all faire, my loue, and there ſhall be no ſpot in thee? I anſwer, that the ſcripture for the certaintie of things to come, ſpeaketh of them as if they were preſent: becauſe God is vnchangeable in all his decrees, and none can hinder his worke.

Now remaineth the laſt verſe of that which I did reade: *Come with me frõ Lebanon my ſpouſe,*

come with me from Lebanon, &c. This may bee expounded two wayes, either that the Lord doth promiſe to ſhew to his ſpouſe the land of promiſe, or that he promiſeth to draw her to himſelf out of all places of the world. If we take it in the former ſenſe, then wee are to remember that the land of Canaan promiſed to Abraham and his ſeede, was a figure of the heauenly inheritance. Then when the ſight of this is promiſed, or the viewing of it from the top of thoſe hils, wee are to be lifted vp to the conſideration of an higher matter, namely, to the beholding of that glorious inheritance which ſhall laſt for euer. For by faith the godly doe behold the land of promiſe, euen the land of the liuing, which the Lorde in great kindnes doth ſhew vnto them. If we take it in the other ſenſe, (which I ſuppoſe is the right) thē the promiſe is this, that howſoeuer his ſpouſe is ſcattered and diſperſed among the nations of the world, he will take her vnto him. You know it is ſet downe that the Lord will gather his elect from the foure windes, and from the vttermoſt parts of the earth. And it is to bee marked that he ſaith, from the dennes of the lions, and from the mountaines of the leopards. For the Church dwelleth here in the world among cruell and ſauage beaſts, which would vtterly deuour her: but the Lord doth miraculouſly keepe her, and ſayth, ſhe ſhall come with him from among them. *The Lord draweth his out of great tribulation,*

lation, as the Elder telleth Iohn, Reuel. 7. vers. 14. And as Saint Paul sayth, *Through many troubles we must enter into the kingdome of heauen.* Let vs not then faint.

THE EIGHT SERMON.

CHAP. IIII.

9 *My sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded mine heart, thou hast wounded mine heart with one of thine eyes, and with a chaine of thy neck.*

10 *My sister, my spouse, how faire is thy loue? how much better is thy loue then wine? and the sauour of thine oyntments then all spices?*

11 *Thy lips, my spouse, drop as honey combes, honey and milke are vnder thy tongue, and the sauour of thy garments, is as the sauour of Lebanon.*

12 *My sister my spouse, is as a garden inclosed, as a spring shut vp, and a fountaine sealed vp.*

13 *Thy plants are as an orchyard of pomegranates with sweete fruites, as Camphire, Spikenard,*

14 *Euen Spikenard and Saffron, Calamus & Cinamon, with all the trees of incense, myrrhe and aloes, with all the chiefe spices.*

15 *O fountaine of the gardens, O well of liuing waters, and the springs of Lebanon.*

16 *Arise O North, and come O South, and blow on my garden, that the ſpices thereof may flow out: let my Welbeloued come to his garden, and eate his pleaſant fruite.*

17 *I am come to my garden, my ſiſter, my ſpouſe: I gathered my Myrrhe with my ſpice, I eate mine hony combe with mine honey, I dranke my wine with my milke: eate O friends, drinke and make you merie, O welbeloued.*

THe holy bridegrome proceedeth in commending his bride with rare and ſingular commendations, as we ſhall beſt ſee in the particulars. And firſt he commendeth her beautie and decking to be ſuch, that it hath (as our engliſh tranſlation ſaith) wounded his heart. Which he alſo repeateth for vehemencie. If we follow this tranſlation, then wee muſt vnderſtand that his heart is wounded with loue: which is a very vehement ſpeech, and doth in deede fitly expreſſe the ſenſe of this place, for it is his purpoſe to expreſſe an exceeding loue. But the ſame ſenſe remaining, we may ſay, thou haſt pluckt away mine heart, my ſiſter, my ſpouſe, thou haſt pluckt away mine heart, with one of thine eyes, &c. For it doth wonderfullie ſet forth the paſſion of loue, when a bridegrome ſhall tell his bride, that ſhe hath his heart,

heart, or that ſhee hath gotten his heart. Hereby appeareth the ſuperabounding loue of our Lord Ieſus Chriſt towards his Church: in that there be not any wordes ſufficient fully to expreſſe the ſame. And here we may ſee againe what a glorie there is in the ſimple & chaſte, and beautifull eye of faith: as alſo in thoſe graces and ſpirituall ornaments which are the fruites thereof, which are meant by a chaine of her necke. O that we could throughly conſider of this, that with a burning zeale, our hearts might alwaies bee enflamed to ſeeke increaſe of the cleere ſight of this pure eye. I might ſtand to rehearſe many places of the holy ſcriptures which do commend faith: but none beyond this, that Chriſt ſaith, that his ſpouſe hath pluckt away his heart, or that ſhee hath gotten his heart, with one of her eyes: O how doth the Lord delight in faith? If faith be one of her eyes, (may ſome man ſay) which is the other? I anſwer, that becauſe the Church is brought in vnder the perſon of a woman, there be two eyes aſcribed vnto her: but withall we muſt know that faith is the one and the other. The holy Ghoſt ſaith, *That the goſpell is the power of God to ſalnation, vnto euery one that beleeueth, to the Iew firſt, and then to the Grecian, adding this reaſon, that the righteouſnes of God is reuealed in it from faith to faith*, Rom. 1. 17, 18. ſpeaking as if there were a double faith, when as in deede there is but one faith, but the ſame weaker and ſtronger. And

ſo in regarde of the ſame increaſe of the liuelie faith, it may be called two eyes, as that place ſaith from faith to faith. In the next place he ſheweth how delightſome and pleaſant her loue is vnto him: he doth expreſſe it by the way of admiration and wonderment, ſaying: *How faire is thy loue, my ſiſter, my ſpouſe? How much better is thy loue then wine?* It is out of all doubte, that all good things come vnto vs, and vpon vs, from the loue of Chriſt: but contrariwiſe our loue towards him can adde nothing vnto his fulnes; and therefore poore ſoules, euen ſimple creatures here vpon the earth that doe loue him, haue theſe temptations euery one of them at one time or other: I loue Chriſt Ieſus from the very bottome of mine heart, but what regarde can he haue of the loue of ſuch a poore ſillie wretch as I am? What can my loue be in his eyes? I feele in deede that I loue him with a loue vnfained. Behold here beloued, vnto your comfort what he pronounceth of the loue, wherewith euery faithfull ſoule doth loue him. How faire is thy loue, my ſiſter, my ſpouſe? How much better is thy loue then wine? It hath been noted in the firſt chapter, that wine is put for all daintie things in a banquet, whereby it is manifeſt, that the loue wherewith wee loue the Lorde Ieſus, is meruailous accepted vnto him. Let vs come to this, to be ſure that we loue him, (not after our owne fantaſies) but with the true ſpirituall loue, and then whatſoeuer temptation

ariſeth

ariſeth to diſcourage vs, let vs bee out of doubte that our loue is precious, delightſome and acceptable vnto him. O, will ſome man ſay, how ſhall I know that I loue the Lord Ieſus Chriſt with this ſincere loue, which hee ſaith here is ſo beautifull in his eyes, and ſo much better then wine? I would faine loue him. I anſwer, thou knoweſt what is written, *If ye loue me, keepe my commandements.* Yea, there ariſeth all the doubt, for who is it that doth not daylie tranſgreſſe the holy commandements of God? We muſt therefore looke to this, how we can ſay with S. Paul, Rom. 7. *I delight in the law of God, touching the inner man.* If we loue the trueth, if we loue holines, righteouſnes, and puritie. And if our ſoule doo loath and abhorre that which is vnpure and vncleane, though it ſticke ſo faſt in vs, that wee cannot whollie caſt it off: let vs bee out of all doubt, that we loue the Lord. O happie and bleſſed then are we, our loue cannot be lightly eſteemed in his eyes. In deede ſuch as doo perſwade themſelues, that they doo loue the Lord, and doo not in the zeale of puritie, loath and deteſt iniquitie from the bottome of their hearts, but can take pleaſure therein, are vtterly deceiued. You know that Saint Iohn caſteth ſuch downe as liars, that ſay, *They loue God and keepe not his commandements. The ſauour of her oyntments*, which he ſaith, *is better then the ſauor of all ſweet ſpices*, is to be vnderſtoode of thoſe heauenly gifts and

graces

graces of the holy Ghoſt, which are beſtowed vpon the faithfull, and for which they bee called Chriſtians. There bee in deede very many which profeſſe in worde that they bee Chriſtians: but they know not what it is to be a true Chriſtian. For where is the ſweet ſauour of their oyntments? What graces of the holy Ghoſt doo appeare in them? Nay, in ſtead of theſe, they doo in all places where they doo become, caſt forth a loathſome ſtincke of their filthie words and wicked deedes. O beloued, let no man ſeduce and deceiue you. You haue many now a dayes which are come to this deapth of impietie, that whoſoeuer will not ioyne with them, to ſtinke in filthines, they by & by, in reproach terme them puritanes. This blaſphemie the Lord God wil powre forth his vengeance vpon one day, although his long ſuffering bee ſuch, that hee ſeemeth not to regarde it. But as it is written, *He that is filthie, let him be filthie ſtill*: let them paſſe, that we may returne againe to the commendation of the bride. *Thy lippes* (ſaith he) *my ſpouſe, droppe as honey combs, honey and milke are vnder thy tongue, and the ſauour of thy garments, is as the ſauour of Lebanon*. Here are in this verſe two things highly praiſed, her ſpeech, and her ſweet ſauour. The former of theſe, euen her ſpeech, is compared to the dropping of the honey combes: as the ſweete drops of honey that diſtil from the honey combs, ſo be the words which come from her mouth:

for

for he ſaith, *Thy lips drop as the honey combs.* And further, her ſpeech is not onely moſt ſweete, but holſome and nouriſhing: which is expreſſed in theſe wordes, *Honey and milke are vnder thy tongue:* honey and milke are for nouriſhment. Theſe are excellent commendations, in which we may note, what an alteration is wrought in the regenerate, and how far they are changed from that which they were in thēſelues by nature. Our Sauiour ſaith in the goſpell, (as you know) *That out of the abundance of the hart, the mouth ſpeaketh.* A good man, out of the good treaſure of his heart, bringeth forth good things: and an euill man, out of the euill treaſure of his heart, bringeth forth euill things: the tongue vttereth but that which is within. And what that is in ỹ vnregenerate or naeural man, heare what S. Paul alleageth: *Their throte is an opē ſepulcher, with their tongues they haue deceiued; the poyſon of Aſpes is vnder their lippes; whoſe mouth is full of curſing and bitternes,* Rom. 3. 13, 14. Is not here a great difference? For curſing and bitternes, whereof the mouth was full, the lips now drop as the honey combes. In ſtead of the poyſon of Aſpes, vndet their lips, honey & milke are vnder their tongue. Is not here I ſay, a wonderfull alteration? For are not they which are regenerate and ſanctified in Chriſt Ieſus, much altered from that they were of themſelues? When as for curſing and bitternes, and for the poyſon of Aſpes, their lips doo drop

as

as the honey combes, and honey and mil[illegible] ar[illegible]
vnder their tongue? Let vs consider of it ye[illegible]
more particularlie. A naturall man hath nothing[illegible]
in him but mere rebellion against God: his hear[illegible]
is euen stuffed full of bitter enmitie and hatred[illegible]
both of God and man. His words doo dishonor[illegible]
and blaspheme God, and they hurt and destroy[illegible]
men: on the other side, a man led and guided by[illegible]
the good spirite of the Lord, hath in him the loue[illegible]
of God, and the loue of men. Pure words doo[illegible]
flow from him, he confesseth the truth, the law[illegible]
of grace is vnder his tongue, hee vttereth the[illegible]
praise and glorie of God, he doth instruct and e[illegible]
difie men; euery way his words are sweete, yea[illegible]
they bee most holsome and nourishing, they be[illegible]
(as it is here said) honey and milke. Where shal[illegible]
wee finde these lips which drop as the honey[illegible]
combes? Where be those tongues vnder which[illegible]
there is honey and milke? What neede that que[illegible]
stion, will some say? They be the lips and tongue[illegible]
of the Church, the lips and tongue of Christians.[illegible]
Goe among them, and see if their lips doo not[illegible]
drop as the honey combes. If we should again[illegible]
demande, whether shal we goe to seeke out those[illegible]
Christians, whose speech is so sweete and so holsome? Some man will say they be euery where, I[illegible]
hope we be all Christians, God forbid else, say[illegible]
they? Then shall we finde that euery where mens[illegible]
lips doo drop as the honey combes, and that ho-[illegible]
ney and milke is vnder their tongue. What are[illegible]
then[illegible]

nen theſe ſweete and holſome wordes, euery
here to be heard? Are they not the ſmooth flat-
ering and diſſembling ſpeeches, which many
doo vſe? Are they not the lies and ſlanders of the
multitude? Or be they not the bitter reproches,
curſes, tauntes and reuilings, which euerflow in
all places? Or the vaine bab'ing, gibing and ieſt-
ng mixed with baudie words? Theſe bee the
hings which the lips of thouſand thouſands doo
drop, and a man ſhall finde almoſt nothing elſe
n all places, euen among thoſe which profeſſe
hemſelues to be Chriſtians, and to be of the true
Church. O Lord, if this be the true Church which
Chriſt doth here deſcribe (as it cannot be denied)
where ſhall we finde her? Surely, they bee but e-
uen a few among the multitude, euen ſcattered
here and there, whoſe lips drop as the honey
combes, vnder whoſe tongue is honey and milke:
Whoſe ſpeech (as S. Paul willeth it ſhould be) *is
alwaies gracious, powdred with ſalte, to know how
to anſwer euery man*, Coloſſ. 4. 6. *Euen ſuch as
may minister grace to the hearers*, Epheſ. 4. 29.
O let vs not then deceiue our ſelues brethren: If
our talke bee vaine and filthie, are wee the true
Children of the Church? Shall it then be ſaid of
vs, thy lips drop as the honey combes, honey and
milke are vnder thy tongue, ſeeke to haue cleane
hearts, that your words may bee ſweete? In the
next words hee commendeth her good ſauour,
ſaying, *The ſauour of thy garments is as the ſa-*

nour of Lebanon. Lebanon was a place in which there did grow such sweet things, as cast forth a delightsome sauour. The bride is perfumed with such graces, that all her garments do smel sweet. This is not meant of the bodily clothing: for many of the Saints haue liued in pouerty, clothed in simple apparell, yea euen in stinking prisons and dungeons. But it is to be vnderstood of the spirituall clothing, where the filthie ragges of the olde man are put off, and the new man is put on, *which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.* Coloss. 3. vers. 9. 10. This is the clothing of which it is sayd, *Thou hast a few names in Sardi which haue not defiled their garments: and they shall walke with me in white, for they are worthie.* Reuel. 3. 4. He was cast forth from the marriage that wanted the wedding garment. Matth. 22. For let a man neuer so impudently thrust in himself in his stinking clothes, to be as one of the Church, yet he shall be thrust out: for the garments of the bride are sweete, euen as the sauour of Lebanon. All at this wedding haue their garments very sweete. Thus haue we seene very great commendations of the Church, but yet heere are further: for it followeth, *My sister, my spouse, is as a garden enclosed, as a spring shut vp; and a fountaine sealed vp.* Here bee two similitudes that doe set foorth her praise. The one is of a garden that is inclosed: the other of a spring or fountaine shut vp and sealed.

ed. This incloſure, this ſhutting vp and ſealing, is firſt to commend the chaſtity of the Church, that with a firme faithfulnes keepeth her ſelfe only to Chriſt. There is no entrance for any beſides him. She loueth, ſhe obeyeth and worſhippeth him, and vnto him ſhe reſerueth all her fruites. She doth not worſhip ſtrange gods, ſhe runneth not a whoring after Idols, ſhe is incloſed and ſealed vp onely vnto her welbeloued. Here is (I ſay) the chaſtitie of the bride. Then ſecondly it ſheweth, that none other are partakers with her in thoſe heauenly treaſures which ſhe receiueth through Chriſt. There bee many in the viſible Church which ſeeme to bee partakers, and make a great ſhew: but the trueth is, none are bleſſed, but only the elect.

Then further wee muſt obſerue, that heere are ioyned together a garden full of ſweete plants, and a ſpring and fountaine of liuing waters. If the beds and plants in a garden be not watered, there can nothing grow, but all will wither and bee fruitles. This garden therefore is well watered: there is in it a ſpring of liuing waters which alwaies do flow, wherewith euery plant and pretious herbe is watered. Theſe waters albeit they abound, yet doe they not flow foorth of the garden, they be ſhut vp and ſealed, none other garden or plants are watered by them. What bee theſe waters? Euen the holy and pure word of the Lord: the holeſome doctrine of the Scriptures.

tures. With this are all the ſweete plants of the Lords garden watered, according to the ſaying of S. Paul, *I haue planted, Apollos hath watered.* 1. Cor. 3. verſ. 6. Wherewith did Paul plant, or wherewith did Apollos water, but with the liuely word of the Lord? Or wherewith ſhall any plant grow vp to bring forth fruit vnto the Lord, but with the ſame word? You haue many indeed that regard not this, which yet take themſelues to be good plants: but they be vtterly deceiued, they be but baſtard ſtocks that bring forth ſower and bitter fruites. For if they will grow and bring forth good fruite indeede, they muſt be continually watered with this fountaine: they muſt receiue in the holeſome word of God into their hearts and ſoules. Now ſome man may here obiect, that the doctrine of Gods word dooth flow forth vnto all, it is not as a fountaine ſealed vp. Do not many reade it, heare it preached, and profeſſe it, which yet are not ſaued? I anſwere, that Indeede after a ſort the word of the Lord dooth flow foorth ouer multitudes, which are not the true plants of the Lord, but ſhall be plucked vp: but it dooth not water them, they haue not the liuely and effectuall working of it to make them grow and beare good fruite. They haue (at the leaſt ſome of them) a taſte thereof: but as water that falleth vpon a rocke doth onely wet the outſide, and not ſoften the rocke or the ſtone within: ſo their hearts remaine ſtill hard as flint, and

it doth not water them. This is it then, the word of God is common vnto many: but touching the liuely efficacie therof, to regenerate, to plant, to water and to make fruitful, it is peculiar to the holy Church. She only is that way, the fountaine in which this liuing water remaineth: her plants be all watered with it, and made fruitfull. If thou doest feele that the pure doctrine of God dooth change thy heart and soften it, so that in stead of those stinking vices which are in it by nature, thou doest bring foorth vertues, then is not the fountaine sealed vp vnto thee: but if thou heare and heare, and reade, and bee not reformed, the fountaine is still sealed vnto thee: yea verily the fountaine is stil sealed vp vnto thee: thou art not by reading or hearing the holy word watered, made to grow and to bring foorth fruite. Thus may wee see how the Church is chaste vnto Christ, bringeth forth her fruite onely to him, and watereth no plants but her owne. And what plants these are, the two next verses doe shew: for heere are reckoned vp all maner of the best plants. *Thy plants* (saith he) *are as an orchyard of pomegranates with sweet fruites, as Camphire and Spikenard, Euen Spikenard and Saffron, Calamus and Cinamon, with al the trees of Incense, Myrrhe and Aloes, with al the chiefe spices.* Here is the goodliest garden that euer was heard of, in which be all these sweete plants: here be sweete fruites, here be all the chiefe spices, and the sweet

incense, there is whatsoeuer is delectable and precious. I minde not to stand vpon these in particular, to shew the excellencie of euery of them, for that is needles: onely take the similitude in general, as if there were a goodly garde in which were all the most precious plants vnder heauen, that doe bring forth the sweetest, the most holesome, the most daintie, and comfortable things that are in the world, and to this Christ likeneth his Church, euen his garden inclosed. By these goodly plants then are meant all the faithfull, they be the Lords plants, they doe beare all these sweete and delectable fruites before mentioned. What a goodly garden hath the Lord planted to himselfe? These plants haue been planted by the Lord in all ages, by the ministrie of his holy Prophets and Apostles, and by the ministrie of all faithfull pastors and teachers: as wee reade how Paul saith of himself, I haue planted. These plants hath the Lord also watered from time to time by the hands of the same his seruants, euen with the pure waters of heauenly doctrine: as it is written, Apollo watereth. From hence the fruits aboue mentioned haue sprong, as the sounde knowledge of God, true light, sincere and liuely faith, stedfast hope, with vnfained loue to God and men, inuocation of the name of God, praise and thanksgiuing vnto his holy maiestie, humilitie, meekenes, gentlenes, long suffering, with all the workes of mercie which proceeding from a

sanctified

ſanctified heart, are ſweeter before the Lord, then all incenſe, or the beſt ſpices. Happie, yea thriſe happie are all thoſe men whom the Lord hath vſed, and doth vſe as his faithfull inſtruments, to plant and to water ſuch a garden, and to make it bring foorth ſuch fruites. What greater or more worthie worke can there be in the world? Great ſhall their rewarde bee before the Lorde God which are found faithfull labourers. Let all the miniſters of the Goſpell conſider well of this place, and eſteem it a farre greater bleſſing, then if they had all worldly dignities & preferments, when their labours are fruitfull in planting and watring the plants of this garden. And let them not bee diſcouraged, that the blinde world ſeeth not the glorie of this work, but deſpiſeth and reprocheth it. Neither let the terrors which Satan doth raiſe, daunt or diſmay them. If a man with all his labours may plant but euen ſome very few of theſe excellent plants, which are ſo deare and precious in the eyes of the Lord, or water them ſo as they become fruitfull in thoſe forenamed fruites, what a glorie is it? What ſhould a miniſter of the Goſpell looke after beſides this? On the other ſide, let the deſtroyers and layers waſte of this garden of the Lord, or ſuch as hinder the growth and fruitfulnes of the yong plants, beholde heere what an heauy iudgement of God hangeth ouer their heads. O how grieuous is it in the ſight of the Lord which they doe? Let it bee

that an earthly prince had such a garden with plants of pomegranates, with sweete fruites, as Camphire, Spikenard, Saffron, sweete Calamus, and Cinamon, with all the trees of Incense, Myrrhe and Aloes, with all the chiefe spices, and men should enter into it, and destroy or lay it waste, would he indure it at their hands? How then will the Lord of lords abide that such wicked men shall destroy or hinder his plants, which so farre passe those earthly plants in price, and not bee reuenged? You know what a woe our Sauiour in the Gospell doth denounce against him that shall offend one of those little ones that trust in him, saying, *It were better for him that a milstone were hanged about his necke, and that hee were cast into the bottome of the sea.* How small regarde of the people of God haue some had, esteeming them little better then swine? What care they for planting or watring, they know not how precious the plants be? They esteeme themselues highly, the garden which they bee in, they weigh not how they lay waste.

Let vs proceede: as it is a most worthy work to be a true planter or a waterer of this garden, which is so goodly and precious in the eyes of Christ: so is it a most happie thing to bee a right plant. And heere let euery man looke well vnto himselfe: we all professe the name of Christ, and so to be plants in this garden. Looke to the fruits before named, which the right plants doe bring forth.

forth. They bee not pride, vaine glory, nor ſelfe loue: they bee not curſing and ſwearing, lying and ſlandering: they be not dicing, drinking and whoring: they bee not enuie, hatred and malice, or a number ſuch like. Theſe be ſtinking and abhominable fruits before the Lord. If thou beare ſuch, what ſhall it auaile thee that thou ſtandeſt for a time as a plante in the Church? For thou ſhalt be rooted out. True it is, that in the viſible Church there bee many ſtinking and noyſome weedes, many baſtard plants which bring forth moſt loathſome fruits, they doo hurt and hinder what they can, the true plants, but the Lord doth put difference, hee will roote them all out, and preſerue euery true plant. It doth then ſtand vs greatly vpon, to looke what fruite we bring forth, and to endeauour to be approued as true plants. Away with thoſe filthie rotten and ſtinking works of the fleſh, and walke in the fruits of the ſpirite. And now in the two next verſes, the Church maketh anſwer vnto her ſpouſe.

In the former verſe (whereas the Lorde had praiſed her to be ſo ſweet a garden, ſo well watered, and of ſuch precious plants) ſhe aſcribeth all the praiſe thereof vnto him, in theſe wordes, *O fountaine of the Gardens, O well of liuing waters, and the ſpringe of Lebanon.* The vniuerſall Church is but one garden, and all the particular Churches be gardens, ſo that her ſpeech and his doo not differ, when he calleth her a garden, and

shee calleth him the fountaine of the gardens: when he calleth her a fountaine sealed vp, which doth water all the plants, she doth acknowledge the truth thereof vnto his praise, affirming that he is the fountaine of the gardens, that is, look whatsoeuer waters of life be in her, yea euen in all particular Churches, they flow from him, hee is the fountaine. What neede I stand here to rehearse vnto you those places of scripture, which doo affirme that in him is all fulnes, and that of his fulnes wee doo receiue, that hee is made vnto vs of God, wisdome, righteousnes, sanctification, and redemption? The bride doth acknowledge all here in one word, when she calleth him the fountaine of the gardens. This is the praise and the glorie which all the faithfull doe giue vnto Christ Iesus, not chalenging any part of goodnes to themselues. Then that she calleth him a well of liuing waters and streames that flow out of Lebanon, or as it may be expounded, that they be springs flowing, which doe excell those that flow from Lebanon, from whence as it is manifest by this place, did runne cleere springs of water: and liuing waters are those that alwaies doo flowe as the springs, opposed vnto standing waters. Then the sense is this, that the graces, and the waters of life, which do flow from Christ vpon his Church, are such as can neuer be dried vp, they flow from a bottomles fountaine: albeit he bestow his graces and gifts from time to time, in neuer so great

measure, yet they be not diminished. The Romish Church hath vtterly fworued from this, and seeketh vnto other mediators to obtaine the things which appertaine vnto righteousnes and saluation. They will not ascribe this glorie vnto him, that he is the fountaine of the gardens, and well of liuing waters: they be not the buds which here speaketh.

And now let vs come to the other part of her speech, which is expressed in the next verse, wherein shee maketh earnest prayer, *Arise O North winde, and come O South winde, blow vpon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out: let my welbeloued come into his garden, and eate his pleasant fruite.* There bee two parts of the prayer: in the first she craueth the inspiration and gracious gifts of the holy Ghost, that the sweete fruites in her may more abound. In the second part she desireth the presence of Christ. I will not stand curiously vpon the nature of these two contrarie winds, the North winde, and the South winde, but take that which is the principall, namely, that the holy Ghost is figured by the winde. For the North winde, and the South winde which blow vpon the trees, and which are felt of our bodilie senses, are not the winds which blow vpon the heauenly plants. It is an heauenly breathing which shee here requireth, euen the inspiration of the spirite of grace, which is called the spirite of sanctification, the spirite of adop-

God. Without this Spirite there is no quickening, no life, no fruite in the Church: and therefore the Church doo rightly crie for the North winde, and for the South winde to blow vpon them, that it to be inspired with all graces and gifts of the holy Ghost, that so the sweete sauour of their fruits may flow forth: for according to the measure of the spirite which men haue receiued, so are their fruits. When the Lord did expresse the great and speciall effusion of his Church, hee said by the Prophet Ioel, *I will powre parte of my spirite vpon all flesh*, which Saint Peter alleageth, Act. 2. And when the Lorde denounceth his iudgement, that the course of his gospell should bee stayed, whereby ceaseth the inspiration of the holy Ghost: Saint Iohn seeth in a vision foure Angels, holding the foure windes that they should not blow, Reuel. 7. Well, the matter is this, all the true beleeuers haue receiued the spirite of God, they are inspired by the holy Ghost: but yet their faith, their hope, their charitie, their knowledge are not perfect. The fruit is not wholly and fully nourished in them, the vertues which are called the fruits of the spirite, which are so sweete and precious before the Lord, are not growne to their full perfection, and therefore being desirous to bee more perfect, they crie out to haue the North winde and the South winde to blow vpon their garden: that is, to haue the inspiration and heauenly breathing of the holy Ghost vpon their

hearts,

hearts, for there is the garden. And vnto this garden they desire Christ to come, saying, *Let my welbeloued come to his garden.* Our desire indeed ought to be continually, that we may haue our hearts sanctified and purged by the operation of the holy Ghost, that so the Lord Iesus may dwell in them. Doo you imagine, that the heart of that man which is full of pride and vaine glorie, of couetousnes, and selfe loue, of fornication and vncleanenes, or such like, is a garden for the Lord Iesus to dwell in? No, no, the diuell dwelleth in such gardens. Those stinking flowers delight his nose. Looke to it beloued, whether there grow sweete flowers, or stinking weeds in your hearts, for thereby you shall know whether they be the gardens of Christ, or the gardens of the diuell.

And now let vs come to the last verse of that which I read vnto you, which is the answer of Christ vnto her desire, that he would come to his garden. The Lorde cannot deny the godly requests of his chosen, and therefore he saith: *I am come to my garden, my sister, my spouse, I gathered my Myrrhe with my spice, I eate my honey combe with my honey, I dranke my wine with my milke, eate O friends, drinke and make you merie O welbeloued.* Beholde here how Christ doth feast and banquet with his Church: her faith, her loue, and all the good fruites that spring from the same, are as Myrrhe and spices, the honey combe and honey, wine and milke. This is plaine and ea-

sie

fie so bee vnderstoode. But how is this that hee willeth his friends to eate and bee merie? Doth not the Church bring forth fruits only to Christ? Doubtles the Church doth bring forth her fruits only to Christ her bridegrome, but yet the friends of the bridegrome, euen the holy Angels, and the faithfull ministers of the word, haue ioy and reioycing, and glorie thereby. The Church cannot by her faith and good works glorifie Christ, but the benefite thereof doth redound to the ioy and felicitie of the Angels in heauen, and well may they be said to eate and drinke, and to be merie. This is cleere, and therefore I will not stand to shew what Saint Peter speaketh of the desire which the Angels haue to beholde the accomplishment of all things betweene Christ and his Church, 1. Pet. 1. Neither the triumphant ioy of these heauenly companies at the mariage day, Reuel. 19. vers. 7. Happie and blessed are all they which come to this banquet.

The Lorde bring vs vnto it for his mercies sake.

Amen.

THE

THE NINTH SERMON.

CHAP. V.

I sleepe, but mine heart waketh, it is the voyce of my welbeloued that knocketh, open vnto me my sister, my loue, my doue, my vndefiled: for mine head is full of dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

I haue put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I haue washed my feete, how shall I defile them?

My welbeloued put in his hand by the hole of the doore, and mine heart was affectioned towards him.

I arose vp to open to my welbeloued, and mine hands did drop downe Myrrhe, and my fingers pure Myrrhe vpon the handles of the barre.

I opened to my welbeloued: but my welbeloued was gone and past: mine heart was gone when hee did speake, I sought him, but I could not finde him, I called him, but he answered me not.

The watchmen that went about the citie found

found me, they smote me, and wounded me: the watchmen of the walles tooke away my vaile from me.

WE had in the former chapter almost nothing but the praises and commendations which Christ giueth to his Church: so highly, and with so many speeches doth hee magnifie and extoll her beautie and excellencie. Here in this chapter, we haue another maner of song, euen an accusing and a bewailing song: for here she accuseth her selfe, and bewaileth her great offence, her vnkindnes and vndutifulnes which she shewed towards her most kinde and louing spouse, reporting also the great affliction and calamitie that light vpon her by that meanes. It is a strange thing that there should be such a suddaine alteration: but this is the state of the regenerate, euen now enflamed and rapt with a burning loue and zeale of Christ: by and by, all seemeth to bee smothered and almost quenched. This is the battaile in them, betweene the flesh and the spirit: this is from the imperfection that is in all the saints.

But let vs come to her words: *I sleepe* (saith she) *but mine heart waketh.* Beholde the holy virgin here fallen a sleepe (for so she saith) but not

(as

(as we may say) into a dead sleepe: for her heart is waking. Shee doth but slumber: none that is halfe on sleepe. We must consider here three things especially, what this sleepe is, whence it proceedeth, and what the effects thereof bee. Touching the first, it were great follie for any man to take it of the bodilie or naturall sleepe: seeing the Church is to be considered altogether according to her spirituall and heauenlie birth. It must needes then be a spirituall slumber, euen a drousines in the heart and mind, touching heauenly things. This proceedeth from the remnants of the olde man in the godlie. *The flesh* (saith the holy Apostle) *lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit is against the flesh & these are contrarie the one to the other, so that yee cannot doo the things that you would*, Galath. 5. vers. 17. When these concupiscences, these corrupt and worldlie lustes wax strong, and doo seeme euen much to preuaile, then is there a damping of the spirituall graces, euen as it were a slumber that falleth vpon the minde: I neede not stand vpon this. Now what effects doo follow, may easilie bee gathered: faith hath not the full and liuely operation, loue shewеth not her heart: prayer waxeth feeble: The ioy and delight in all holy exercises is decayed, and so the practizing of vertue is but slender. But here is not all: for the holy scripture in sundrie places calleth vpon vs to take heede that we fall not into this sleepe,

but

but that we watch, shewing great danger that may ensue. *Be sober and watch* (saith the Apostle) *for your aduersarie the diuell goeth about like a roaring Lion, seeking whome hee may deuoure.* When wee bee a sleepe, the diuell stepped in to leaders vnto many sinnes. And surely the regenerate in their sleepe and securitie doo commit and braue with much vanitie, and many sinnes they goe smoothelie away withall. They are not in this sleep so much grieued as they ought to be when the name of God is dishonored. Yet here is one speciall thing to be noted, that when shee was a sleepe, yet her heart was waking: what is that? Or what doth that shew vnto vs? It sheweth plainelie that the true and liuelie faith, and the spirite of sanctification are neuer vtterly extinguished. The worke of the new birth can neuer bee quite put out: a most singular comfort. The faithfull doo fall often times into great securitie, negligens they are in performing holy duties, yea they doo commit grieuous sinnes (as Dauid in his securitie, did commit adulterie and murther) but yet the heart waketh, there remaineth somewhat within, the sleepe is not deadlie: all faith, all loue, all zeale is not gone, howsoeuer the lustes of the flesh play their parte for a time. This doth S. Iohn plainely teach saying, *Whosoeuer is borne of God, sinneth not, for his seede remaineth in him, neither can he sinne, because he is borne of God*, 1. Iohn 3. verse. 9. From hence it is,

that

that when the Church sleepeth, her heart waketh, that the seede of God doth remaine in her. And from hence it is that she cannot loose the worke of sanctification, that she is borne of God, who is immortall and vnchangeable. And as it is written, *Euery branch that beareth fruite, he purgeth, that it may beare more fruite*, Ioh. 15. *No fruitefull branch shall be cut off*. Then let them goe, which with the Papists would vphold and maintaine that wicked opinion, that the true iustifying faith and sanctifying spirite, may bee had and vtterly lost. Well, thus hath the bride in few words set forth into what estate she was fallen, and now she setteth forth in the next place, the great kindenes and loue of her spouse, who seeketh to awake, and to raise her out of this dangerous sleepe. *He knocketh, and he calleth, it is* (saith she) *the voice of my welbeloued that knocketh*. These speeches are vsed in other places of the holy scripture, for to the Church of the Laodiceans, which was neither hote nor colde, the Lord Iesus saith, *Beholde, I stand at the dore and knocke, if any man heare my voice and will open the dore, I will come in vnto him, and will suppe with him, and he with me*, Reuel. 3. vers. 19. 20. Also he calleth vpon the Church of Sardis to awake to strengthen the things that remaine which are readie to die, Reuel. 3. vers. 2. This is the singular kindenes of our Lord to knocke and call at the dore of our hearts to waken vs when

we

we are fallen a sleepe: hee will not lose his beloued, whom hee hath bought so deere. This great kindenes of his, doth the bride here set forth in diuers his speeches, *Open to me my sister, my loue, my doue, my vndefiled, for mine head is full of dew, and my locks with drops of the night.* First, he that is the rich treasure of all felicitie, doth offer himselfe to dwell in the heart, for hee doth knocke, and saith: *Open to mee*; what greater kindenes can be shewed? And most happie are they which doo open vnto him. What is all the ministerie of the gospell, but a knocking and a calling of the Lord, to haue vs open the doore of our hearts to let him in? And marke wel how the faithfull, euen in their sleepe can tell that it is the voice of Christ when hee doth knocke and call. Hee saith, *My sheepe heare my voice*, Iohn 10. Many say they cannot tell which is the truth when they heare it, or which is the voice and doctrine of Christ, for how should they know? or how should they be able to iudge? Doth not euery sect of false teachers boldlie and constantlie affirme, that their is the doctrine of God? Such as doo speake thus, doo plainely confesse that they be vtterlie voide of Gods spirite, and of all grace, and that in deede they bee not of his sheepe, which heare and know his voice, they be not of his Church, which euen in her sleepe, doth know his voice. If the faithfull (as it is here manifestly) doo heare and know the voice of Christ

when they bee asleepe, how much more when they be awake?

Then in the next place, mark what kind words he giueth to his Church, and what honor he doth vouchsafe her: for hee calleth her *his sister, his loue, his dooue, his vndefiled*. The Lord dooth not flatter nor faine, for he is the trueth it self, he hath freely layd all this dignitie and honour vpon her, and made her thus precious and deare vnto himselfe. In the next clause of his speech which she reporteth, hee dooth perswade her to open vnto him for this cause, that hee hath vndergone so much for her sake, his head is wet with dew, and his lockes with the drops of the night. The similitude is drawne from hence, as if a louer should goe farre in the night, and indure much inconuenience to visit his spouse for her good. True it is, that the paines and sorrowes which Christ hath vndergone for his spouse, cannot bee expressed. And now marke to what end she reporteth here his kinde and louing speeches, and the things which he did vndergoe and indure for her sake. Surely she dooth by this deeply accuse her selfe, and aggrauate her owne offence, euen bewayling it: for the greater his loue and kindnes is, which he doth vtter by his words, and the greater inconueniences he doth vndergo for her sake, the more hainous is her offence, the more grieuous is her breach of dutie, which she openeth in the words that follow, when she would not open

vnto him. As if she should say: ah wretch that I am, how great is my sinne, that he being so exceeding kind and louing vnto me, and induring so hard things for my sake, I shewed my selfe so vnkinde and so vndutifull vnto him? For beloued, wee must needes in all reason confesse this, that the greater the loue and kindnes of Christ is towards his Church, and the harder things hee hath gone through for her sake, the more hainous is her offence in setting so light thereby, and in shewing her selfe vnkinde and vndutifull towards him. And now marke how she shewed her selfe vnkinde and vndutifull: for she layeth open all the matter, and confesseth euen against her selfe how it was. She was in the warme bed of securitie and carnall ease, she is very loath for his sake to arise out of it, and therefore she maketh these excuses, *I haue put off my coate, how shall I put it on? I haue washed my feete, how shall I defile them?* We may easily vnderstand these excuses according to a literall sense: and vnder these two are meant all the excuses which the flesh doth minister vnto the faithfull, when they bee fallen into the spirituall sleepe, and are layd downe in the bed of securitie, to hold them from rising out of it at the calling of Christ. O they be a number of excuses which the flesh doth minister in such cases. Is it reason that I should so be diseased? shall I forgoe such and such pleasures and commodities? yea shall I cast my selfe into so

great

great inconuenience and danger? I thinke the Church was neuer in greater slumber and securitie then it is now here in this land: peace and wealth hath wrought it. And let euerie man enter into his owne conscience, and see what excuses the flesh doth minister to keepe him backe at the daily knocking and calling of Christ to open the hart vnto him, that there may be a sound profession of the Gospell. Is there not a feare of this or that inconuenience or harme that wil follow? Are we not loath to take any paines, or to forgoe any vaine delights and pleasures? and is there not great colour of reason in all our excuses? And I pray you marke well, she doth heere make excuses why she could not arise to let him in: but yet she did not forsake him, he is still her welbeloued: for so she sayd, *it is the voyce of my welbeloued*. How then? Why she knoweth him, she heareth him, she loueth him, but it is in such a drowsie maner, as that she will hold the world and him together. She will not cast her selfe into perill, nor forsake the vaine delights of the flesh for his sake. Behold how strong the remnants of sinne be which remaine euen in the faithfull and deare children of God. Whither should they fall if the Lord should let them alone? Doe they not euen refuse to open the doore of their heart vnto Christ? Is not this a marueilous vnkindnes? and doth it not deserue sharpe punishment? Surely we must needes looke for it: if not in generall

scourges, yet in particular corrections and chastisements vpon those which doe appertaine to the Lorde, and whom hee will raise out of their sleepe.

Now let vs proceede vnto that which dooth follow: *My welbeloued put in his hand by the hole of the doore, and my heart was affectioned towards him.* The Church dealing so vnkindly, her spouse will now withdraw himselfe after a sort from her: but yet he will first leaue that behinde that shall both raise her vp to seeke after him, and support her in her afflictions. This is his mercie, he will not suffer her to continue in that sleepe which she was fallen into, hee will make her to see her offence and repent for it, yea shee shall seeke him sorrowing, and suffer great affliction, he withdrawing himselfe after a sort, that she may take better heede to her selfe hereafter, and bee more carefull of her owne good. That she saith, *he put in his hand at the hole*, and our translation addeth, *of the doore*, it doth rightly in deede expresse the sense. The similitude is taken from hence, when a doore is locked yet there is a key hole: and so heere, when the hearts of the faithful be after a sort locked vp, and Christ standeth at the doore of the heart and calleth and knocketh, yet they doe not open vnto him, but make excuses, he doth finde some little creuice or hole, as through the doore, to put in his hand. This hand is the spirit of Christ, for he doth by his

spirit touch the very inward parts of her heart. And what followeth of that inward touch of his spirit? She telleth ye, when she sayth, *my heart was affectioned towards him.* The words are thus, my bowels were moued towards him. Whereby is meant, that all the inward affections and powers of her minde, are moued with repentance. Now she is grieued, and displeased with her self, now she lamenteth her owne follie that she was so vndutifull; now her heart is againe rapt with loue of him, now she will entertaine him. Behold here the power of Gods spirit what an alteration he maketh in men, how farre he changeth them from that which they were before: downe goeth the power of the flesh where he commeth. An example of it you may see in the Apostles of Christ: how weake were they and fearefull at the time of Christs suffering: Peter himselfe denieth his master at the voyce of a mayd; but after the holy Ghost came downe vpon them in the day of Pentecost, of a companie of weak and trembling lambes, they became so many mightie lions, they feared not the whole world. So is it with all the true children of the Church, they be heauie and lumpish and dull when the flesh hath a stroke, and beareth some sway. Euerie small thing is a let, and ministreth some excuse to keepe them backe: and the excuses seeme to be reasonable. But when the touch of the holie spirit commeth, that Christ put in his hand at the hole

hole of the doore, then there is a quicknes, a life and a mouing then nothing can let but they wil seeke Christ. It is then (beloued) a thing most necessarie that wee continually begge of the Lord, to giue vs his spirit: for we cannot conceiue what a wonderfull change and alteration he wil work in vs. He putteth downe the flesh, and raigneth with power. VVe remaine dull, slow, fearefull, weak and negligent, because we rest in our own power very much, and do not instantly and continually craue the gifts of the spirit. But wil some man say, doth not Christ dwell alwaies in the hearts of the regenerate? And haue they not alwaies the spirit of sanctification? How then is it sayd, that Christ calleth and knocketh to haue them open vnto him, and to let him in, and they make excuses and refuse? Or how is it that hee now toucheth them with his spirit, which they had before? This is easie to be answered: for we must note, that there bee degrees of the measure of graces and gifts of the holy Ghost. The Apostles had the holy Ghost, and did beleeue before Christs ascension, but not in that measure which afterward. So also the Lord Iesus dwelleth in all the faithfull, euen in those which haue but the least sparke of the true and liuely faith: but hee knocketh to haue them open the doores of their hearts wider, and to receiue him in after a more full maner. *Lift vp your heads ye gates* (saith the Prophet) *and be ye lift vp ye euerlasting doores,*

and

and the king of glorie shall come in. Psal. 24. We must set the doores of our hearts wide open vnto Christ, that he may dwell and raigne in vs.

Let vs returne againe to the spouse: beholde what a working this hath in her that Christ put in his hand. See what a mouing followeth vpon her repentance: for she stayeth not in the bare motions of the minde (as many haue some touch and some motions, but they vanish) but she ariseth to open the doore vnto her welbeloued: it is not now grieuous vnto her to put on her coate. O quickning spirit of grace, O happy touch with the finger of Christ, what should become of vs, what duties to our Lord God should wee performe without him? And now marke what followeth: *My hands* (saith she) *did drop downe myrrhe, and my fingers pure myrrhe vpon the handles of the barre.* In these words she magnifieth the graces of her welbeloued. She could touch nothing with her hands, nor lay her fingers vpon nothing where he had put in his hand, but all did droppe with myrrhe, euen with pure myrrhe. For this is her meaning, that her welbeloued did but put in his hand, and yet he had left euen by his touch, such abundance of sweet graces, that whersoeuer she toucheth, her hands drop with the same. What a wonderfull sweete Sauiour is this? And how happy are they whose harts he dooth thus touch? When this heauenly pure myrrhe in such plentie is put into the heart, al the affections

affections are moued. The soule cannot but bewaile her follie & vnkindnes shewed to so sweet a Sauiour. There cannot but follow a loue, a zeale, and a care to performe all duties. The Lord extend this mercie towards vs, euen to put in his hand at the doore of our hard and dull hearts, to leaue there this pure myrhe, that the hands and fingers of our soules may drop therewith, that so we may bee moued with greater and more earnest affection to seeke the Lord, then hetherto we haue. If he let vs alone, whither will our flesh carrie vs? how deepe and dangerous will our sleepe be that wee are fallen into? The fruites of the flesh which so grieuously breake forth, euen in the forwardest professors of the Gospell, doe manifestly bewray that wee are fallen asleepe. The Lord hath called, and doth continue calling and knocking at the doores of our hearts, but we are full of excuses. Some are giuen to worldly delights and pleasures: Others are so set vpon gathering and heaping vp riches, that they cannot open vnto Christ.

It followeth in the text: *I opened vnto my welbeloued, and my welbeloued was gone and past.* This is strange, that he calleth and knocketh whē she was asleep and lay in her bed, and now when she is risen out of her bed, and dooth open the doore to let him in, he withdraweth himself, and will not bee seene. Her vnkinde dealing did deserue this. But doth this proceede from loue in

then that hee doth withdraw himselfe? He hath iust cause to bee displeased, and so to withdraw himselfe: but yet hee doth it euen of purpose for her good, and that of a singular loue. But seeing Christ dooth dwell alwaies in the faithfull, how can it be said that he doth withdraw himself out of their sight, especially when he hath made their hands to drop with myrrhe? This is out of doubt, that the Lord is sometimes present in the soules of the faithfull, and yet to their thinking he seemeth to bee absent. He doth support them, and yet they haue not that liuely and comfortable feeling of his presence which they wish, & which sometimes they had. Then the heart is troubled, then they mourne, then they seeke and call after him: for she saith, *Mine heart was gone when he did speake, I sought him, but I could not find him: I called him, but he answered me no.* Alas now she is afraid that her vnkind dealing should cause him to forsake her. Now she openeth the doores of her heart to let him in, she seeketh him, and calleth after him: but he will not be found. Who is able to expresse the griefe and sorrow that the godly soule hath, when there is a deepe remorse for sinne, and she seeketh to feele the consolation of Christ, and he hideth himselfe from her? True it is that the soule could not repent, she could not open the doore to receiue him in, she could not so earnestly seeke and call after him, vnles he were present, and did worke these things in her.

her. For all these things proceede from his grace: but yet he doth seeme to be absent. Let not this seeme strange, when as the glorious Godhead vnited to the manhead in Christ, was not separated from the same when he did hang vpon the crosse, but did as it were retaine, or not shew forth the power, that the same manhood might suffer the punishment that is due to sinne, and so make satisfaction: and yet he cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken mee?* Shall not we then take it in some sort that he forsaketh vs, euen when yet he is present? But here againe it will be demanded, how that which is spoken in this place agreeth with the promise which is made, *Seeke and ye shall finde, &c.* seeing here is no mention for all vehement calling after him that she doth finde him: yea still she goeth on, and it is not said that she found him. I answere, that here is indeed a most vehement seeking, and not said that she found him: but yet in the beginning of the next chapter, she saith, *hee was gone downe into his garden.* Then she perceiueth at the last that he is present with her, and there indeede she glorieth of him. How cõmeth this to passe? Surely he entreth in when the doore is opened, though she doth not perceiue it. This is the doctrine which I gather, which I would make plain vnto you: that when the faithfull soule is moued with earnest repentance, and doth seeke and crie after the Lord Iesus Christ, and seemeth not to

finde

finde him, yet she doth finde him. Christ dooth not enter in so fully and at once that she dooth perceiue it, and yet in the end she findeth that he is come to his garden. She findeth that her rising out of her sleepe and from her bed, her opening the doore, seeking and calling after him, were not in vaine. This (beloued) ought greatly to encourage vs, that when we seeke and cannot perceiue that we finde, not to giue ouer: for doubtles in the end we shall wel perceiue that our seeking and our sorrowing after him hath been to good purpose. Many seeke, and because they find not euen according to their desire at the first, they faint and giue ouer: but we must remember that Christ is very precious, and if with long and great seeking, we finde that we haue gotten euen some little hold for to retaine him with vs, it is much. To gaine but a little in heauenly things, euen with very great labour and trauaile, is much.

And now to the last verse which I did reade: *The watchmen that went about the citie found me, they smote me, and wounded me: the watchman of the walles tooke away my vaile from me.* Here now she reporteth what grieuous calamitie and affliction came vpon her. *The watchmen found her*: and what doe they? Her words bee plaine, that *they smote her, and wounded her, and tooke away her vaile.* For vnder these speeches she

she setteth forth a very great affliction that light vpon her, as it shall appeare, if we doe marke the circumstances well in all things. First, her conscience accuseth her how vnkindly she hath dealt towards Christ, who hath withdrawne himselfe worthily for the same. Then next, her protector hiding away himselfe, what a feare is it to a tender virgin in the night to fall into the hands of rough and churlish fellowes? yea when they be highly displeased with her, as it appeareth they are: for they beat her, and that grieuously, for they doe wound her. O what a crueltie is this? what sauage men are these? Yea marke further who they be. They bee the watchmen, euen they that of all others should chiefly defend and comfort her: for the watchmen are the shepheards, the pastors and teachers. The Prophets of God doe complaine of the wicked priests in the time of the Law, how they did afflict the godly. And how great are the calamities which the sincere professors of the Gospell haue suffered a long time, I may say many hundred yeres, at the hands of the proud Romish prelates? what is the cause that they bee so displeased? Surely because she seeketh after Christ. They will beare with any disorder saue that. They bee proude, they bee pompous, they be delicate, they be blinde: euen like to the blinde Pharisies. If any ryot, or excesse bee committed, these watchmen bee good fellowes

but if any seeke Christ, that is intolerable, that is to their disgrace, vpon such they fall, they beate and wound them. And as the mother of all liue complaineth, they take away her vaile. For virgins to haue a vaile, it was for modestie and chastitie, and so it was an honour. They doe deface and dishonor her all that they can: for they will make as though she were an harlot. They terme them that seeke Christ, Heretikes, Schismatikes, and fantasticall. They lay all the most vile reproches vpon them which they can deuise. Let it not then trouble vs when it commeth to passe, that those which haue the office and place to teach the Church, doe beate and wound, and disgrace her. Did not the builders refuse Christ himselfe the head corner stone? What marueile then, though they beat his seruants? Thus much for this time.

THE

THE TENTH SERMON.

Chap. V.

7 *I charge you, O daughters of Ierusalem, if you finde my welbeloued, that you tell him that I am sicke of loue.*

8 *O faireſt among women, what is thy welbeloued more then another welbeloued? what is thy welbeloued more then another louer, that thou doeſt ſo charge vs?*

9 *My welbeloued is white and ruddie, the chiefeſt of ten thouſand.*

10 *His head is as fine golde, his lockes curled, and blacke as a rauen.*

11 *His eyes are like doues vpon the riuers of waters, which are waſht with milke, and remaine by the full veſſels.*

12 *His cheekes are as a bed of ſpices, and as ſweete flowers, and his lips like lillies dropping downe pure myrrhe.*

13 *His hands like rings of gold, ſet with the Chryſolite: his belly like white Iuorie couered with Saphyres.*

14 His

His legges are as pilars of marble, set vpon sockets of fine golde, his countenance as Lebanon, excellent as the Cedars.

His mouth is as sweete thinges, and hee is wholy delectable, this is my welbeloued, this is my Louer, O daughters of Ierusalem.

O the faireſt among women, whither is thy welbeloued gone? whither is thy welbeloued turned aſide, that we may ſeeke him with thee?

My welbeloued is gone downe into his garden, to the beds of ſpices, that he may feede in the gardens and gather the Lillies.

IN the former part of this Chapter we haue ſeene how the bridegrome calling and knocking to raiſe his Spouſe out of her ſleepe, euen from her carnall ſecuritie, what excuſes ſhe made, how vnkindly and how vndutifully ſhe dealt with him. Moreouer wee haue ſeene howe he for the ſame vnkindneſſe did hide himſelfe from her, ſhe ſeeketh after him, and falleth into the handes of the watchmen, euen into the hands of proud prelates and falſe paſtors, which dealt very cruelly with her: they did not kill her, for God will not ſuffer his Church to be rooted out. Nay you ſhall ſee, that they did not with all their rough tyrannie ſo much as once daunt or diſcourage her fró ſeeking after Chriſt. They beat her, they wounded her, and tooke a-

way

way her valle, doth she now shrinke for feare, or doth shee hide her head, and giue ouer seeking? No verily, she goeth on in her search, and is more vehement then before: when the flesshe had prevailed to cast her into a sleepe, those seemed great and waightie reasons to withholde her, *I haue put off my coat, and I haue washed my feet. For how* (saith she) *shall I put it on? and how shall I fowle them?* Christ seemeth to require that at her hands, which was without al reason, but after he had touched her inwardly with his spirite, she saith not, I haue sought him, and by seeking haue beene beaten, wounded and disgraced, how shal I seeke him any longer? There is now a fire kindled in her, which none can quench: the flesh now with all the excuses which it can make, is put downe. The faithfull doe neuer loue Christ, nor seeke after him with more burning zeale, then in time of hotte persecution. All experience hath taught this from time to time. And the practize of the spouse here doth fully shew it. It was to this ende and purpose that hee put in his hande at the hole of the doore, and left that sweete mirrhe with which her fingers did droppe. The trueth is, that in those times of calamitie, the Lorde seemeth to hide himselfe away, and to be displeased for the sinnes of his people, yea, euen to be farre from them: but yet by that inwarde touche, by putting in his hand, he is very neere vnto them: he doth support and comfort them most mightily.

Let

Let vs therefore come to her woords, out of which these thinges are to be gathered. *I charge you O daughters of Ierusalem, &c.* She doth likewise lay a straight charge againe vpon her companions for her woordes are, I binde you with an othe, good dames cause you to sweare. This sheweth great ardentmencie as it shall also appeare by their answere. Now for the matter of her charge, this it standeth, *If you finde my welbeloued, what will you tell him? that I am sicke of loue?* The maner of her speech that she saith, *What will you tell him?* And then addeth, *That I am sicke of loue,* doth shew a most vehement passion. For indeede the woordes are not so vttered as to say, If you finde my welbeloued, tell him, but what will you tell him? This demaunding the question, sheweth that her loue did so appeare, that they must needs if they will tell him any thing, tell him that shee is sicke of loue. This is exceeding great loue, that she commeth to be loue sicke. If the flesh had borne sway, that would haue reasoned after another sorte, as thus: I opened the doore, and hee withdrew himselfe, and by that occasion I haue suffered great calamitie, therefore I haue small cause to loue him: seeing hee doth hide himselfe from mee, and cause me to bee thus stricken and wounded, why should I set mine heart vpon him? The flesh, I say, would minister such kinde of reasons: but the faithfull are not leddeby the wisedom of the flesh, but by the heauenly spirite which

which teacheth them the more they suffer for Christ, the more to loue him. This is a thing passing all humane reason, that the bride hauing fallen into so great affliction by seeking after her bridegroome, is thereupon sicke of loue. The faithfull indeed reioyce in afflictions, it is an honour vnto them to suffer for Christ, and the more they suffer for his sake, he doth so strengthen them, and so worke in them, that the more they loue him. There is more zeale and more earnest prayer to God, among the faithfull, in the times of affliction and persecution, then in the time of prosperitie and worldly peace, for then commonly men doe growe secure. Thus hauing heard what the Spouse saith to the daughters of Ierusalem, let vs nowe see what answere they doe make. *O thou fayrest among women, what is thy welbeloued more then an other welbeloued, what is thy welbeloued more then another louer, that thou diest so charge vs?* First of all we may obserue here, that these daughters of Ierusalem doe beholde and acknowledge a great beautie in the Spouse, that they call her the fairest among women. Such as be goodly to behold, if they fall into affliction, that maketh them to seeme base and contemptible. The Church then being beaten and wounded by the watchmen, and her vaile taken from her, being I say thus dishonoured and disgraced, what beautie could they behold in her? Afflictions doe make base and contemptible to the outward

ward shew: but the beautie of the Church is not outward in things of this life, but in spirituall ornaments, which are not diminished or dimmed by afflictions, but doe then indeede shine brightest of all. For in the times of the greatest persecutions, when the godly are imprisoned, racked, and tormented, you shall beholde their stedfast faith, their feruent zeale, their patience, their contempt of this world, with many other vertues; for which the daughters of Ierusalem, euen the weaker sort which are not as yet fully come to Christ, do commend the spouse to be the faireſt among women. Doubtles the very tyrants and persecutors themselues, are sometimes constrained to wonder at the glorie of the faith and patience of the Martyrs.

Then in the next place, wee may note, how these daughters of Ierusalem do as it were wonder why she is so earnest in seeking her welbeloued, that she doth so charge them with an othe, to tell them that she is sick of loue: and hereupon they enquire and aske her what there is in him more then in another welbeloued. For if there be not an excellencie in him aboue all others, why should she be so vehement in seeking him? We do account it a vanity to be vehement in seeking that which is little worth. Here is a very speciall thing to be obserued: and that is, that the earnest seeking of the faithfull after Christ, is a meane to stirre vp others to enquire what hee is, or what there

there is in him. Reason doth leade men thus far, when they see that no threatnings, no bonds, no tortures nor sufferings can preuaile, but that the faithfull doe become more earnest in seeking Christ, to say within themselues, out of all doubt there is some great thing that carrieth these men, it is no small benefit for which they will endure all these things. Hereupon they begin to enquire what Christ is: *What is thy welbeloued* (say they) *more then another welbeloued, O thou fairest among women, what is thy welbeloued more then another louer, that thou doest so charge vs?* Here is one great step towards eternall life, when men doe begin to enquire after the Lord Iesus Christ, and are desirous to know what his benefits and graces bee. Where wee may note, what a good thing it is to bee zealous and earnest in the profession of the Gospell, and in seeking the Lord Iesus Christ. O it winneth soules: for it causeth such as had little regard, to enter into the consideration what Christ is, when they see that others be so earnestly bent, and cannot be driuen back by no meanes from seeking after him. And when there is a coldnes, especially in the ministers of the Gospell, so that they seeke more earnestly after the things of this life, then they doe to set vp the kingdome of God; doth it not as it were beate into the heads of the ignorant and simpler sort, that the Gospell is a thing of no very great price? for if it were worth the while, if it

should

should bring such felicitie, would not the teachers themselues set more by it, then by the transitorie things of this life? What is this but to lay stumbling blocks before the lame, and to cause the blinde to goe out of their way, which thing God doth accurse in the Law? Wo be to them therefore, who ought to bee the most zealous of all others in forsaking this world and seeking after Christ, that by their zeale they might stirre vp such as know not the Lord, to enquire what the matter is about which they be so hote and vehement: and they be so colde that way, and so studious for this world, that they driue them backe. Beloued, know this also, that whosoeuer he bee, though meane in the world, that in simplicitie and singlenes of heart, with earnest zeale ioyned with meekenes, doth seeke the Lord, he shall bee a meane, yea euen an happie instrument to winne others.

LET vs proceede: The daughters of Ierusalem doth aunswer, *What is thy Welbeloued more then an other welbeloued?* And hereupon she describeth him vnto them. First before we enter into the examination of the particulars, we may consider in generall how that she setteth foorth here the riches, the dignitie, the glorie and beautie of Christ. This is the office of the Church, to publish Christ crucified. And now most willingly she doth it, when the daughters of Ierusalem are so inquisitiue for to know him. She describeth him

him at large, to the end that it may appeare there is good cause to moue her so earnestly to seeke him, and that it may be known what a rich iewel they obtaine that doe finde him. Moreouer, doe you not see here that it is not persecution that can stop the mouth of the Church, or make her keepe silence, but she will publish and lay open the glorie and the praise of her welbeloued. O how the cruell enemies doe storme, how they gnash their teeth, how they fret and rage? when the sincere and holy doctrine of Christ is published, which doth lay open the rich treasures of his grace, that in him there is all fulnes of good things to make men happie: and yet for all their furie, the faithfull seruants of the Lord will not be silent, but describe him and paint him foorth. True it is, when Christ is earnestly sought, and when his graces are throughly layd open, it doth displease proud Heretikes, which stand to maintaine their owne doctrine and wicked errors. Also the glosing hypocrites which boast of their owne merits, and glorie in themselues, cannot abide it. Yea such as haue made their belly their god, that mind earthly things, are angrie, because it is a great rebuke vnto them that Christ being so excellent, they preferre the world before him. They would faine seeme good, being altogether worldly: and when it is made manifest that they make a blinde and a wicked choice, in setting much by the world, and so little by Christ, it doth

disgrace them. But howsoeuer they doe take it, the holy Church describeth Christ. And in the first place she speaketh of his colour and complection, saying, *My welbeloued is white and ruddie.* These two colours together doe shew a right excellent constitution of bodie, and also a very perfect beautie. The Lord is goodly and glorious, he is strong, and shall remaine for euer in perfect health. Yea he is so excellent, that she sayth, *he is the chiefe of ten thousand.* Or as the very words are, *he is the standard bearer of ten thousand.* He doth indeed very far excell all creatures whatsoeuer, euen men and Angels: and therefore she sayth, *he is euen as the standard bearer of ten thousand.*

Then comming to the seuerall parts, she saith, that *his head is as fine gold.* Two names of golde indeede are heere vsed: the first of them signifying fine golde: the other, golde that is purified. Hereby she setteth forth how excellent, how glorious, how rich and shining the head of Christ is. For among earthly things, what is comparable to the fine gold? If there bee a purpose to signifie somewhat by euery part of the bodie, then by the head of Christ wee may vnderstand the deitie. *I would haue you know* (saith S. Paul) *that Christ is the head of euery man, that the man is the head of the woman, and that God is the head of Christ.* 1. Cor. 11. vers. 3. But I doe not hold it necessarie to interpret euery part as signifying somewhat, but

but onely this, that the spouse describing Christ, and her description according to the parts of the natural bodie of man, to the end that it may be known, that he is wholly & altogether beautifull, delectable & precious. It was accounted beautifull in a young man to haue black haire, and therefore she saith, *his locks are curled, and blacke as a raven.* But what shall we take it that here is any allowance of that vanitie like wearing of long haire, which is vsed in these dayes? No verily, for the Nazarites which according to the lawe of God did weare long haire, did weare it after a most graue and sober maner.

In the next place she doth praise his eyes, saying, *His eyes are as doues vpon the riuers of waters.* Or thus more plainly, *His eyes are as the eyes of doues, which are beside the riuers of waters.* The eye of the doue (as it hath been sayd before) is a beautifull eye, chaste and single. To the doues eyes therefore she likeneth the eyes of her spouse, ment to set out a further cleerenes and brightnes in them, here is mention of those doues, which are by the riuers of cleere waters, as the doues doe delight. Then further she saith *they be washed with milke,* (that is for a further brightnes) *and remaine* (as our translation saith) *by the full vessels.* There is no speech of vessels in the Hebrew text, but thus the words doe stand, *they remaine vpon the fulnes.* And heere wee must know, that the word which he vseth which may be

and called

called *fulues*, signifieth the holow places in which a precious stone is set: for the precious stones set vpon rings, or in rowes vpon the Ephod, had their hollow places in which they were cunningly set, and so were called stones of fulues, because they did in so fit sort fill their hollow places. Vnto this she likeneth the eyes of her spouse, saying, *that they remaine vpon the fulues*, that is, they do like precious stones that are set most cunningly fill their hollow places. This is a speciall commendation of the eyes in man or woman. For if the eyes doe stand forth too much, it is a deformitie, as we vse to say, goggle eyed: and likewise if they be sunke in so deepe, that they be then, as we vse to terme them, hollow eyed. The bridegrome is neither of these his pure eyes are as precious stones that are fitly set in their places.

It followeth: *His cheeks are like a bed of spices, and as sweete flowers.* Touching the latter clause, the word is translated *flowers*, doth vsually signifie towers: but it hath bin taken here for flowers that grow vp in the bed of spices. If we should expound the words then after the vsuall signification, we should say, as the towers of those which make sweete oyntments: but we may more fitly take them to be the growen plants of those that deale with spices & sweet oyntments, seeing the proper signification of the word is of greatnes.

His lips are like lilies dropping downe pure myrrhe.

myrrhe. The lillies are faire and ſweete of themſelues, vnto theſe ſhe compareth his lips, adding moreouer that they drop pure myrrhe. This is to bee referred vnto that holy and heauenly worde which proceedeth out of his mouth. In the commendation of his Church, Chriſt ſayd, that *her lips did drop as the honey combe:* and now ſhe ſayth, that *his lips doo drop pure myrrhe.* It is the ſame word which proceedeth from the mouth of either of them, but not after the ſame maner: for it hath proceeded from him as from the author thereof, it is his owne, it hath the high and ſoueraigne authoritie from him. The Church doth vtter it not as her owne, but as hauing receiued it from him. True it is, that his lips do drop pure myrrhe onely to his ſpouſe: for the reprobate do cauſe by their obſtinacie, that this *word which commeth out of his mouth, is vnto them a ſharpe ſword by which they are ſlaine: yea it is a fire that doth burne them vp, it dooth vexe and torment them.* Reuel. 11. Looke therefore vnto thy ſelfe, if the word of the Lord be ſweete and precious vnto thee, euen as the pure myrrhe: if thou take thy ioy and ſolace in it, as the Prophet reporteth of himſelfe in Pſal. 119. then art thou a childe of the Church. The light and power of the heauenly word doth dwell in thee, and thou doeſt obey it. But if it be bitter vnto thee, becauſe it diſcloſeth the foule wickednes of thy heart, if it torment thee that thou canſt not abide to heare it,

but

but as it is written, thou ſayeſt to the Prophets, *Prophecie vnto vs pleaſant things*; then wofull is is thine eſtate: for thou loueſt darknes more then light, becauſe thy works be euill. It is a neceſſarie thing that euery one looke well into this matter.

The next is, that ſhe ſayth, *His hands are like rings of gold, ſet with Chryſolite.* It may bee thus taken, that vpon hands are rings of gold, ſet with Chryſolite. The maner hath been and is to weare rings of gold, which are ſet with goodly precious ſtones. The difference is not great whether way wee take it, either that his hands are like thoſe rings of golde, or that they bee ſo adorned with them. This is the ſenſe, that al is rich and ſhining. The like ſenſe there is in the next words: *His belie is like white Iuorie, couered with Saphyres:* for theſe things are beautifull and precious.

It followeth: *His legs are as pillars of marble ſet vpon ſockets of fine gold: his countenance as Lebanon, excellent as the Cedars.* Here is a fit repreſentation of his legs by pillars of marble, and, ſet vpon ſockets of fine golde, and of his ſtature, that he is to looke vpon, as the Cedars of Lebanon. For I doe take it manifeſt, that the countenance is to bee referred to his whole ſtature. For it is, as if it ſhould bee ſayd, looke vpon him, and hee is of ſtature goodlie and tall, euen like vnto the high Cedars of Lebanon. His mouth is as ſweete things, and hee is whollie dele-

table. Verie well wee may take the wordes thus, the roofe of his mouth is moſt ſweete. As if ſhe ſhould ſay, there commeth nothing out of his mouth, but that which is ſweete. Yea, ſhee will not ſtande to proſecute euery parte, but addeth a generall commendation, that he is wholy delectable, or moſt to be deſired. From toppe to toe, he is glorious and excellent. Wherefore hauing thus deſcribed him, ſhe concludeth with an exclamation: *This is my welbeloued, and this is my louer, O daughters of Ieruſalem.* Hauing ſuch a Louer as this whome ſhee hath deſcribed, hath ſhe not good cauſe to ſeeke after him, yea euen to be ſicke of loue for him? This glorie, theſe riches, this ſweeteneſſe of Chriſt is hidden from the world, and that is the reaſon why men do not longe after him. Moſt admirable it is, that ſuch treaſures of eternall life and happineſſe are propounded in the Goſpell, and the ſame ſo lightly eſteemed. But doubtleſſe men cannot eſteeme that they ſee not. *The God of this worlde* (ſaith *S. Paul*) *hath blinded the mindes of the infidels, leaſt the light of the Goſpell of the glorie of Chriſt ſhould ſhine vnto them, who is the image of God.* 2. Cor. 4. verſ. 4. The Goſpell doth ſhine moſt cleere and bright, the Church, as wee ſee here, publiſheth and painteth out Chriſt Ieſus to bee moſt precious, but the deuill is ſo great a lord in the worlde, he hath ſuch power, hee beareth ſuch ſway, & worketh with ſuch efficacie in the hearts

of

of men, that very few doe behold the light, very few are brought thus farre, as to imbrace the saluing health of the Lord. O how wretched is the state of mankinde, that such a redeemer beeing published cannot bee brought to imbrace him. But the Spouse doth well, shee goeth on in performing her office: shee doth not onely seeke after him euen sicke with loue, and will not with any crueltie be dismayed, but also publisheth and proclaimeth openly, what manner of one hee is, shee describeth his riches and his glorie, euen to this end, that such as doe not yet know him, may be moued to seeke him, & to enioy his benefites.

Now whereas shee hath thus described her welbeloued, let vs see what effect it worketh, for this appeareth by the next words, which be these: *Whether is thy welbeloued gone, O thou fairest among women? Whether is thy welbeloued turned aside, that wee may seeke him with thee?* The daughters of Ierusalem hearing that hee is so goodly a person, are stirred vp, and enflamed with a desire to seeke him: this is the effect which her speech in commendation of Christ wrought. And this is a singular effect, and such as in deede is to bee reckened among the chiefe actions vnder heauen, that are wrought by men. For if wee doo regarde it first, in respect of the Lord, what a worthie thing is it to spread the glorie of Christ? And then if wee respect men, what a worke of charitie is it to draw men into the way of salua-

tion?

tion? Here may the ministers of the gospell learne what their chiefe duetie is: for that which doth draw men chiefelie to loue and to seeke after Christ, that is their chiefe worke, there are they to imploy all their chiefe force. And you may see heere that it is the describing of Christ, euen the opening and displaying of all ỹ rich treasures and graces which bee in him that draweth men to seeke him. Who will seeke that which he knoweth not? And who will not seeke after a precious iewell? Behold therefore how the holy Apostles, euen Paul and the rest, doo paint out Christ crucified? They doo lay open that in him wee shall finde a remedie for all our miseries. Then are all true pastors and teachers to be plenteous in publishing, and manifesting the graces and heauenly blessings that be in the Lord Iesus. For so shall they draw men effectually to long after him, and to seeke him. Here is a description made by the spouse, as we haue seene, but all vnder an allegorie, for that is according to the whole course of this song, let the ministers of God lay open all things as plainely as may be: for that shall comfort the hearts of the simple. Let them declare how *that he is made vnto vs of God, wisedome, righteousnes, sanctification, and redemption*, 1. Cor. 1. *Let them open how hee was made the curse, to deliuer vs from the curse of the lawe*, Galat. 3. *Yea how he made him sinne for vs, that knew no sinne, that we in him, might be made the*

righteousnes

righteouſnes of God, 2. Cor. 5. For theſe things being laid open, men wil couet with the Apoſtle, Philip. 3. to be found in him, euen as we ſee how theſe daughters of Ieruſalem doo now earneſtly enquire whether he is gone, that they may ſeeke him. And marke well how they ſay not ſimplie that wee may ſeeke him, but, that wee may ſeeke him with thee. This is the right way to ſeeke him in deede, this is the onely way to finde him, when any doo ſeeke Chriſt with the Church. You haue many heretikes and ſchiſmatikes, which hauing come to ſome knowledge of Chriſt, grow into a pride, and diſdaine to ſeeke him with the Church, ſcatter, and will needs ſeeke him by themſelues. But heere is their reward, they finde the diuell, they finde not Chriſt. Let vs learne heere to enquire for him of the ſpouſe, and to ſeeke him with her: for ſo it is ſaide, that we may ſeeke him with thee.

And ſee now what followeth, for the Church maketh anſwer, and telleth them where they ſhall ſeeke him. Her words are the beginning of the next chapter, but more rightly they are to be added to this chapter. Thus they be: *My welbeloued is gone downe into his garden to the beds of ſpices, that he may feede in the gardens, and gather the lilies: I am my welbeloueds, and my welbeloued is mine, who feedeth among the lilies.* Here we may obſerue diuers points, as firſt that ſhe telleth them Chriſt is in his garden, among the ſweete ſpices

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and delectable flowers, that is to say, hee is in his Church. If they will finde him, there hee is to bee found, and not any where else: secondly, it is apparant, that although Christ doo after a sort withdraw himselfe, so that the Church in great affliction doth seeke him sorrowing, yet she knoweth that he is with her. The faithfull doo feele Christ present, but they doo not feele him in that measure which they doo wish. If it were not so, how could the spouse so crie out after him in seeking, and yet tell them that he is in his garden. Here is the consolation of the faithfull, that howsoeuer the Lord doo seeme to withdraw and hide away himselfe from them for a time, yet they be sure he cannot forsake his Church, and they shall finde him. And for this cause, yee see how she glorieth in the next words, of that communion that is betweene her and Christ. *I am* (saith she) *my welbeloueds, and he is mine, that feedeth among the lilies.* If she be his, if she wholly deuote her selfe to liue vnto him, and to set forth his glorie: (for the faithfull are so to be consecrated vnto him in soule and bodie, as to liue vnto him) and on the other side, if he with all his riches and glorie bee hers, as with assurance of faith shee doth glorie, then how can it be but she shall finde him? Yea, she hath found him: for the Lord doth enter into all that open vnto him, albeit in their calamities he seemeth to haue hidden himselfe. O what a treasure hath that soule, which with a true and

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liuelie faith can say, I am the Lords, and the Lord is mine, he feedeth among the lilies, he will feede mee with all sweete things. Let vs make it our whole studie to come to this: for hee that hath Christ hath all.

THE ELEVENTH SERMON.

CHAP. ~~VII.~~ 4.V

1 *Thou art faire my loue, as Tirzal, comelie as Ierusalem, terrible as an armie with banners.*

2 *Turne away thine eyes from me, for they ouercome me, thine hayre is like a flock of goates which looke downe from Gylead.*

3 *Thy teeth are like a flocke of sheepe, which goe vp from the washing, which euery one bring out twinnes, and none is barren among them.*

4 *Thy temples are within thy lockes as a peece of a Pomegranate.*

5 *There are threescore Queenes, and fourescore concubines, and of the Damosels without number.*

6 *But my doue is alone, and my vndefiled, she is the only daughter of her mother, and she is deere to her that bare her: the daughters haue seene her, and counted her blessed, euen the Queenes and the concubines, and they haue praised her.*

7 *Who is shee that looketh forth as the mor-*

ning, faire as the Moone, pure as the Sunne, terrible as an armie with banners?

8 *I went downe to the garden of nutts, to see the fruites of the valley, to see if the vine budded, and if the Pomegranates flourished.*

9 *I knew nothing, my soule set me as the chariots of my noble people.*

10 *Returne, returne O Shulamite: returne, returne, that we may beholde thee. What shall you see in the Shulamite, but as the companie of an armie?*

IN this chapter, and also in the next the Lorde Iesus doth giue very great and singular cõmendations vnto his deere spouse testifying his loue and heartie affection towards her. Hauing praised her greatly in the fourth chapter, it may be demaunded, why he doth it againe after the same maner, and in diuers things with the same words. In deede this may be demaunded, least we might imagine that here were a tedious and a needeles repetition. The truth is, that this commendation is not superfluous, but commeth very fitly for the consolation of the spouse. For you haue seene in the beginning of the former chapter, what a faulte she committed, how vnkindelie she dealt with Christ, how he, as displeased, withdrew himselfe, so that shee fell into great afflicti-

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on. Shee hath bewailed her offence, shee hath sought after him sorrowing, and now least it might seeme that she had by her sinne, lost that her former beauty and commendation, yea, least there might seeme to remaine some blot, or that his former liking were diminished, he doth giue her the same, or rather greater commendation then before. This in generall is the cause why the Lorde doth againe commend his Church. And here we beholde the great kindnes of the Lorde Iesus Christ, who doth quite forget all offences committed against him, as if they had neuer been. He doth not so much as once vpbraide his spouse with her vnkinde dealing: doubtles the faithfull hauing felt and tasted how sweete the Lord is, being made partakers of his great benefits, when they bee ouertaken with the flesh, and doo fall into vndutifulnes towards Christ, are much dismayed, fearing that now they cannot be beautifull and deare in his sight. Now they haue deformed themselues, how should he loue them? Here is therefore a speciall comfort ministred, that they hauing lamented and bewailed their offences, seeking after him with an earnest desire, trauailing and heauie loaden, hee doth refresh them, he doth imbrace them, hee doth loue them, he doth commend them, and delight in them, euen as if they had neuer dealt euill towards him. What a sweete Lord is this? What a gracious redeemer haue we? Can any tongue expresse the

riches of his grace? Or who is able any way to set forth the bountifulnes of this Lorde? This ought not to encourage vs to doo euill, that hee quite forgetteth all our offences, as if they had neuer been done: when we repent and turne vnto him bewailing our transgressions, and thirsting for his grace: for shall his kindenes increase our vnkindenes? Shall his loue cause vs to hate him? Shall his weldooing towards vs, be an occasion that we should dishonour him? For what else doo all they that are emboldened to sinne, but dishonour him, hate him, and shew vnkindenes vnto him? Nay his exceeding loue and kindnes must worke another effect in vs, and that is to loue him with a vehement loue: for doth not loue require loue againe, and is not kindenes to bee rendred vnto kindenes? Take holde of this beloued, let it not depart away from you, the Lorde is kinde and mercifull, he is bounteous and long suffering he doth receiue poore sinners that repent, therefore let vs with our whole heart loue him, let vs honor and obey him. Let it not come nere vs, that his goodnes should make vs naught: I speake it, because there bee many, who when they heare that Christ is so ready to forgiue, doo euen boldelie commit all maner of wickednes: for they hope of pardon. This is a most vile thing, a thing abominable, for they doo abuse the graces of God, to their greater condemnation: for the holy Apostle vrging and requiring that men

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which profeſſe Chriſt, ſhould adorne the doctrine of God our ſauiour, by their godly deedes, addeth this golden ſentence: ſaying, *For the grace of God hath appeared, which bringeth ſalnation vnto all men, teaching vs, that denying vngodlines and worldly luſtes, we ſhould liue ſoberly and iuſtly, and godly in this preſent world*, Tit. 2. verſ. 11. 12. If the grace of God hath appeared to this ende, how farre bee they out of the right way, which take occaſion thereby to continue in ſinne? But let vs omitte theſe, and come to the words of our text.

Thou art faire my loue as Tirza, comely as Ieruſalem, terrible as an armie with banners. Theſe were two goodly cities, Tirza, and Ieruſalem, and vnto theſe for beautie and comelines, the bridegrome doth compare his loue. And in the next clauſe he commendeth her terrible fortitude in battaile. In the firſt chapter, he doth liken her to the troupe of horſes in the chariots of Pharaoh. She is ſtrong and prompt to the battaile. And here commending her for the ſame thing, hee ſaith, *that ſhe is terrible, as an armie with banners.* But vnto whom is her fortitude and valure thus terrible? Surely, euen vnto all her foes, but eſpecially vnto the infernall powers, for hauing put on the whole armour of God, ſhe ſtandeth in the ſpirituall battaile, ſhe reſiſteth and putteth diuels to flight. Thus we ſee, why he ſaith ſhe is terrible as an armie with banners: an armie that is

ſtrong and marcheth with banners or enſignes, is very terrible to their aduerſaries to behold: euen ſo is the ſpouſe vnto the whole armies of diuels. But here we muſt obſerue, that the faithfull ſoule hath not this force of her ſelfe, but is ſtrong and terrible in the mightie power of God. And Saint Paul teacheth, that *wee ſtand in that inuincible power of his, by putting on the whole armour of God.* Epheſ.6. The Church of Rome hath turned all this into an outward ſhew, yea euen into a ridiculous mockerie. For whereas the true Church militant goeth thus armed to the battaile, and is indeede, through the mightie power of God, terrible euen as an armie with banners: they take away the word of God, and ſo depriue them of all the whole armour of God, and in ſtead thereof, goe marching in proceſſion with great high banners vpon poles, as if the diuell were to bee fought againſt, or feared with ſuch a ſhew.

Then it is added in the text, *Turne away thine eyes from me, for they ouercome me.* In the fourth chapter he vſed another ſpeech, but to the ſame effect: for when hee ſayd, that ſhe pluckt away his heart with one of her eyes, or that ſhe had with the beautie, ſimplicitie and chaſtitie of her eyes euen wonne his heart, it expreſſeth a moſt vehement affection of loue towards her. Euen ſo in this place the beautie of her eyes doth affect him in marueilous maner. The ſenſe is very plain, but the phraſe of ſpeech is not ſo plaine: & there-

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fore taken diuers waies. For ſome do take it that he doth not ſay, turne away thine eyes from me: but turne thine eyes towards mee. For Chriſt doth not meane that the Church ſhould turne the eyes of her faith from him. And then the other clauſe they do expound thus, that they may lift me vp, that is, with conſolation. This dooth highly commend the glorious beautie of faith: and moſt true it is, as Chriſt ſaid before, *My doue that dwelleſt in the clift of the rock in the hollow place of the ſtayers, ſhew me thy face, make me to heare thy voyce, &c.* So heere it is not his meaning, but that ſhe ſhould turne her eyes towards him, and not turne them away from him: but yet ſurely (as I take it) the words are to be tranſlated thus, *Turne thine eyes from me for they ouercome me.* It is a kinde of ſpeech that doth in the higheſt ſort that can bee, expreſſe how much the beautie of her eyes doth delight him. For euen as ſhe ſayd ſhe was ſicke of loue, ſo he ſaith that he is, as it were, ouercome with loue. Doubtles there is not any way to expreſſe a greater liking. Is the beautie then and the glorie of faith (for that is the eye, or rather the eyes of the ſoule) ſo excellent in the eyes of the Lord, and ſhall not wee labour to obtaine ſo precious a gift? O beloued, the more ſtedfaſtly we truſt in the Lord, the more acceptable it is vnto him, the more we doe glorifie him. Did he not euen wonder at the faith of the Cananitiſh woman, ſaying, *O woman*

great is thy faith, be it vnto thee euen as thou desirest? Matth. 15. And also Iesus marueiled at the faith of the Centurion, Luk. 7. Let vs not hearken to the blasphemous voyce of the Papists, which affirme that it is arrogancie and wicked presumption for men to assure themselues of the fauour of Christ: and that it is humilitie to be alwaies in doubt. Indeede because their faith is reposed in their owne works and merits, they may right well stand in doubt: but all that rest in the promises of GOD, euen in his free mercie in Christ, what cause is there that they should doubt? Is God vntrue of his promise? Yea al they which will not beleeue, but doubt, doe make God a liar, 1. Ioh. 5. which is blasphemous.

It followeth: *Thine haire is like a flocke of goates, which looke downe to mount Gilead. Thy teeth are like a flocke of sheepe, which go vp from the washing, which euery one bring out twinnes, and none is barren among them. Thy temples are within thy lockes as a peece of a pomegranate.* I ioyne all these together, because we had thē before in chap. 4. and in the very same words, only one word excepted, & that is, that he likeneth her teeth heere, as the word is in this place, to a flocke of ewes: and in chap. 4 he calleth them a flock of equall bignes, or as it were cut of equall stature and proportiō. I need not stand here again in exposition, but onely thus much the Lord will haue his Church to know, that vpon her repentance,

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her fault is forgotten, he doth not, nor wil not ſo much as once vpbraid her therewith. This kindnes of our Lord ought we to imitate, which is no eaſie thing vnto fleſh and blood. For let a man ſhew vnkindnes and doe iniurie vnto men, they wil not forget it very readily: they wil quickly vpbraid, and caſt each other in the teeth. Therefore here is a great vertue to be imitated.

In the words that follow, there is yet a further and a more ample declaration of the glorious beautie and rich decking of the Church. The firſt part of the words are thus: *There are threeſcore Queenes, and foureſcore concubines, and virgins without number.* We reade that king Salomon had ſeuen hundred Queenes, and three hundred Concubines, 1. King. 11. 3. If theſe be the wiues and concubines of Salomon, which are heere mentioned, then hee wrote this Song before hee did come to haue that former exceſſiue number. But it ſeemeth to me that he doth not ſpeake of Salomons Queenes and concubines, but as if he ſhould ſay; let there be threeſcore Queenes, and foureſcore Concubines, and virgins without number. Or thus, howſoeuer it be that there bee many Queenes, and many Concubines, with an infinit number of virgins. Queenes are of great dignitie, they bee attyred with coſtly things. And the Kings in olde time had alſo beſide their Queenes, Concubines: theſe were beautifull and in rich attyre, according to the glorie of Princes.

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Then alſo the Queenes (as it is the maner) had their maidens of honor to attend vpon them, and likewiſe virgins did waite vpon the Concubines: ſo that here is a very great number of beautifull damſels, which are alſo in goodly attyre. Then in a word, to come to the matter, thus it is, as if the Lord ſhould ſay, ſet all the goodly Queenes and Concubines of the great Kings and Princes of the world, with all the companie of their virgins together, it is a goodly ſhew, there is glorie, beautie and riches: but yet they are nothing comparable to my loue, her beautie and glorie farre excelleth them all. For you ſee how he addeth in the next verſe, *but my doue is alone.* How is ſhe alone? She is alone, or ſhe is only beautiful, rich, and honourable. The birth, or the honor touching parentage of the Queenes, the beautie and decking of Concubines and virgins, is great and highly eſteemed in the eyes of the world: but it is not comparable to the honor, beautie, and rich ornaments of my doue, of my vndefiled, ſhe ſtandeth alone in all excellencie. All theſe Queenes and goodly women come not nigh her in anie thing, ſhe is without peere. For let vs conſider euery particular. It is a thing of great account in the world to bee the daughters of mightie Princes, to bee the wiues and concubines of Kings: but what is the dignitie of this their birth, if you doe compare it with the dignitie and honour of the birth of the Church? It is a ſpiritual birth, yea

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the faithfull bee all borne of God. Then looke howe the Lorde God farre excelleth in honor the Kinges of the earth, so his children excell their children in dignitie. The Princes of this worlde giue a great honor to their children, but they can not giue vnto them the honour of this heauenly birth, the Church only hath it, & therfore he saith, she is the onely daughter of her mother, deare to her that bare her, or as the word is, pure to her that brought her forth. This it is, *Ierusalem* (as S. *Paul* saith) *which is from aboue, is the mother of vs all*, she is the mother of the whole church vpō earth: and she is mother vnto none else. All that be her children, be the children of the most High. Thus we see, how for dignitie and honor in birth, shee far excelleth all the Queenes in the world. Then if wee respect beautie and rich ornaments, what is all the beautie of the Queenes, the concubines and maidens of honor, and all their gorgeous attire and iewels, compared with her spirituall ornaments and beautie, euen the rich graces of the holy Ghost, by which shee is comelie in the eyes of God? Beholde how honourable and how beautifull they be in the eyes of God, which are rich in faith. And albeit our blind nature is such, as it is much mooued with the pompe and glittering shewe of the worlde, and cannot see into the glorie and riches of faith, or with what goodly ornamentes it decketh the soule, especially in poore men which are in base estate: yet it pleaseth

seth God sometimes to make the great ones in the world euen to wonder at the beauty and glorie of his Church. And therefore it is added, the daughters haue seene her, & counted her blessed, the Queenes and concubines and they praised her. Then as I say, sometimes the Lords people, the Lords nation, hath bene so honored by God here in the world, euen in the sight of men, that the very heathen nations haue confessed that they were happy, God had done great thinges for thē. And marke the order here vsed for their praise, for he saith first, *that the daughters saw her, and counted her blessed.* These be the Virgins that he spake of, which are without number. These virgins do much behold the beautie of the Queenes and concubines, yea they looke also vpon their owne riche attire: and they account these great thinges, but so soone as euer they behold her, she so dimmeth all their beautie and glorie, so that they set their eyes vpon her, and pronounce her blessed. Yea, the Queenes and the concubines also, which glorie in their owne pompe and dignitie, doe extoll her. For in the nexte verse the speeche of their wonderment at her is thus expressed, *Who is this that looketh forth as the morning, faire as the Moone, pure as the Sunne, terrible as an Armie with banners.* Here bee foure things, by which as you see they commend her wonderfull beautie. The first is the Morning, for they wondring demaund, Who is this that looketh

looketh foorth as the morning? It is a goodly ſight to ſee howe the bright morning looketh forth. Alſo the Moone, which is the ſeconde, when it is cleare, ſheweth a great beautie in the night. But the brightnes and puritie of the Sunne, vnto which they liken her in the thirde place, is farre beyond all. And then in the laſt place, they ſay that ſhee is terrible as an armie with banners. This terror, as we noted before, is chiefly to the infernall ſpirites, euen the diuelles againſt whom ſhe is armed with the whole armour of God: but yet theſe alſo do acknowledge a terror and a maieſtie. They that are conuerſant in reading the holy Scriptures, can tell, that God hath ſundrie times greatly magnified his Church in the eyes of the worlde. Nowe let vs conſider the whole matter to our owne comfort. How good is our eſtate, how well is it with vs, euen when we bee poore and baſe, and miſerable in the world, if we be of this number? We are not Kinges, wee are not Queenes, weare not great Lords, we arenot Ladies, wee are not in wealth, nor in pleaſures: let vs neuer in murmuring ſorte thinke that the Lord hath dealt more hardly with vs, becauſe he hath not giuen vs theſe: but let vs conſider that he giueth vs the greater, euen the thinges which excell all the glorie of this worlde. Yea, and let Queenes and great Ladies learne here, that their greateſt glorie is not in their parentage, in their beautie, riches and ornaments, but if they be the

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true children of the Church, if they bee regenerate, euen borne of God, and decked with the giftes and graces of the holy Ghoſt: let them, I ſay learne, if they will bee wiſe, to eſteeme this heauenly birth, theſe ſpirituall treaſures and beautie aboue all other. We hold it great follie, euen in Kings and Queenes, and in all the great Lords and Ladies, if they ſo ſtande vpon the honor of their birth, and doe ſo glorie in their worldly pompe and riches, and are ſo drowned in earthly pleaſures, as that they thinke not vpon, nor eſteeme the dignitie of the ſpirituall birth, but ſet light by the heauenly ornamentes: becauſe in ſo doing, they eſteeme very droſſe aboue pure gold. How then can we be excuſed? which hauing but euen as it were ſmall droppes, yea, but the ſcraps or crummes of theſe worldly things, wherewith Kinges and Queenes abound, doe yet ſo eſteeme them, as that wee looke not after thoſe great thinges, which are beſtowed vpon the Church, for wee eſteeme euen the droſſe of droſſe aboue all. Let therefore this great praiſe which the Lord giueth to his ſpouſe, that ſet all the Queenes and honorable womẽ in ỹ world together, their dignitie, beautie & rich ornaments are nothing vnto hers, mooue vs to ſeeke to be of that ſocietie. Is not this a worthy thing to be conſidered? Is it not a ſingular comfort? that there is more dignitie, more honour, more true glorie and riches in the ſoule of one poore man or woman, that hath the

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true and liuely faith of Christ, then there is in all the Kings and Queenes of the earth. It may bee obiected, that the glorie of the Kings is greater then the glorie of the Queenes: then seeing the Lord doth meane to commend the dignitie and beautie of his spouse by comparison, why dooth he not compare her with the highest? For answer to this, you must note that the Church is brought in vnder the person of a woman, and therfore she is compared with women. As a Queene she is compared with other Queenes, and she standeth alone in her glorie. Also this is to be vnderstood, that by the Queenes and Concubines & virgins, are meant the nations, kingdomes and prouinces with al their glorie: wherby you may see that the highest glory of kings and princes is comprehended. We will proceed: *I went downe to the garden of nuts, to see the fruites of the valley, to see if the vine budded, & if the pomegranates florished. I knew not, my soule set me as the chariots of my noble people.* Hitherto, as you haue seene, in this Chapter Christ hath highly commended his Church, to this end as I noted vnto you, that hee had quite forgotten her vnkind dealing towards him, and that there remained no blot of her offence, but all is washed away vpon her heartie repentance, and earnest seeking after him. Yet he withdrew himselfe at the time of her vnkinde dealing: but not for any loathing, but for another purpose, as heere now he mentioneth. For this

this is out of doubt that the Lorde dooth heere ſpeak to comfort his ſpouſe, and not to mention any thing to vpbraide her withall. Hee maketh mention of a going downe vnto her, he ſpeaketh of a time paſt, euen that time which is mentioned in the former chapter, when he found her aſleepe. The Church is called a garden, *I went downe to the garden*, ſaith he. And here it is tranſlated, the garden of nuts: being generally ſo taken by the Hebrew Rabbines. The word which they take to ſignifie the nut, is not found elſewhere in all the Scriptures. And ſurely it ſeemeth a ſtrange maner of ſpeech to ſay, I went down to the garden of nuts: and then mentioneth not that hee went to ſee the nut trees, but to ſee the fruites of the valley, whether the vine did bud, or pomegranates floriſhed. They doe but geſſe that the word ſhould ſignifie either nut or nut tree. It is farre more fit to take it thus, I went downe to the dreſſed garden. For *Egoz*, which is taken to be the nut, may bee deriued of *gazaz*, which ſignifieth to cut or to ſheare. And ſo, as I ſayd, it ſeemeth moſt fit to take it thus; I went downe into the dreſſed garden. For by this ſpeech may be vnderſtood all the coſt and labour which the Lord beſtowed vpon his vineyard, by the hands of his ſeruants the Prophets and Apoſtles, and by the miniſtrie of all other faithfull teachers. Looke where planting, watering, dreſſing, and all maner of labour and coſt is beſtowed, there fruites are expected:

expected: and therefore it followeth, that the Lord went downe to this his garden, to see the fruites of the valley, to see if the vine budded, and if the pomegranates florished. Now heere the Spouse faulted: for she was fallen into securitie, and did not bring forth fruites answerable vnto so great graces as were bestowed vpon her. We must needes confesse this, that where much hath been bestowed, much is required: and yet the faithfull oftentimes which haue had great teaching, daily admonitions, and many gifts of the holy Ghost, doe faile thus farre, that their fruites are but slender. Many complaints of this you shall finde in the Prophets, and great afflictions for the same. And here the Lord sayth, *I did not know*. What did he not know? Not such a florishing of the plants as ought to haue been. And here as it seemeth, now after her repentance the speech is mitigated, least hee should seeme to charge her ouer seuerely. For among men things are sometime, which when they doe not flatlie denie to haue been, they say they knew not. But doth not Christ here vpbraid his Church? No verily, but he mentioneth her fault, to this end that she may be comforted, by knowing to what end he seemed to depart, after hee had raised her out of her sleepe. His affection is great towards her, which dooth cause him to seeke her speedie repentance. He departeth away most swiftly, as he saith: *My soule set me vpon the chariots of*

my noble people: or as the word doth ſignifie, *of my franke or willing people*. The willingnes of the minde carrieth one ſpeedily. Thus it is then, as if a louer ſhould make all haſte to fetch his friends and companions to accompanie him to meete his ſpouſe, and to behold her comelines & beautie in ſeeking to come vnto him. In the Church, when ſhe hath offended, and doth repent, there is a great glorie of God ſet foorth, and a right ioyfull ſpectacle to the holy Angels of heauen, which doe reioyce when ſinners are conuerted to the Lord.

Therefore in the next words he calleth vpon her to returne. Why, had ſhe not returned? had ſhe not ſought him, confeſſing and bewayling her offence? Yes: He doth not vtter this ſpeech vnto her now, *Returne, returne, O Shulamite returne: returne that we may looke vpon thee*: for what needed this vehement calling of her to repentance now, when ſhe had ſo earneſtly ſought him? But he mentioneth how he called vpon her when ſhe refuſed to open vnto him. She is called the Shulamite, of Ieruſalem, which was called *Shalem*, the name being deriued from peace for the Church is at peace with God. He ſayth *Returne, returne, and we will looke vpon thee*. Euen he with his companions. And then to ſtirre the ſame his companions to beholde the beautie and glorie of her comming, he ſayth: *What ſee you ſee in the Shulamite?* and addeth, *as the co-*

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panie of Machanaijm. The word ſignifieth the companies or tents of two armies that meete. When Iaakob returned from Laban, as you may reade, Geneſ. 32. verſ. 1. the Angels of God met him, and when Iaakob ſaw them, he ſaid, *This is Gods hoſte*, and called the name of the ſame place *Machanaijm*. Vnto this ioyfull meeting of thoſe two armies, the Angels on the one part, and Iaakob with his companies on the other, the Lord doth liken the returning of his Spouſe vnto him: be with his holy Angels being one armie, and ſhe with her companie an other. A moſt ioyfull meeting, a glorious ſight. Surely we are fallen a ſleepe, and I ſuppoſe that before the Lord depart, and we be afflicted, we will not awake to ſeeke him.

THE TWELFTH SERMON.

CHAP. VII.

1 *How beautifull are thy goings with ſhoes, O princes daughter? the ioynts of thy thighs are like iewels, the worke of the hands of a cunning workman.*

2 *Thy nauell is as a rownd cup that wanteth not licour: thy belly is as an heape of wheat compaſſed about with lillies.*

3 *Thy two breaſts are as two yong Roes that are twins.*

4 *Thy necke is as a tower of iuorie: thine eyes are like the fiſh pooles in Heſhbone, by the gate of Bath-rabbim: thy noſe is as the tower of Lebanon, that looketh toward Damaſcus.*

5 *Thine head vpon thee is a ſcarlet, and the buſh of thine head like purple: the king is tied in the rafters.*

6 *How faire art thou, and how pleaſant art thou, O my loue in pleaſures?*

7 *This thy ſtature is like a palme tree, and thy breaſts are like cluſters.*

8 I ſaid, I will goe vp into the palme tree, I will take hold of her boughes: thy breaſts ſhall now be like the cluſters of the vine, and the ſauour of thy noſe like apples.

9 And the roofe of thy mouth like good wine, which goeth ſtraight to my welbeloued, and cauſeth the lips of the ancient to ſpeake.

HEre is another commendation of the Church by her ſeuerall parts. If you demaund why this is, ſeeing here is no ſpeech of the Church, nor nothing that hath fallen out betweene the former commendation and this. Here is a new occaſion for all that of praiſing the ſpouſe. For as I noted, the former was for to cõfort her, and to raiſe her vp after her affliction and ſorrow, by aſſuring her that ſhe was euen as precious and beautifull in his eyes, as ſhe was before her vnkinde dealing. And now hauing ſhewed that his withdrawing himſelfe was for her good, euen to call her by a moſt ſerious repentance, this calling did take effect, ſhe did returne vnto him, and now this commendation which is from the feete to the head, ſheweth how comely and delectable ſhe was in her repentance, or in her returning vnto him. We may learne then how pleaſant a thing it is in the eyes of the Lord, when his people that haue ſtepped awry & gone

astray, doe returne vnto him by vnfained repentance. But let vs come to the words of the text. *How beautifull are thy goings with shoes, O princes daughter?* The word is, *thy goings, or thy treadings, or thy steps, or thy feete.* The sense indeede commeth all to one, whether wee take it of the feete, or of the treadings: for the beautie of the feete is in the right steps. Here therefore by a word of admiration or wonderment, is set forth how exceeding comely and beautifull her feete and steps be: for he saith, *How beautifull are thy goings?* When men depart away from the Lord, their steps be vnseemely, their waies bee crooked waies, euen such as the Lord God doth abhorre. But the Church seeking after Christ, in such sort as you haue seene before, and approching neerer and neerer vnto him, her steps, her treadings, her feete and all her waies are marueilous beautifull in his eyes. And it is chiefly here to be noted that he doth mention her shoes. Our translation saith, *How beautifull are thy goings with shoes:* but more fully to expresse the sense, and according to the very words, we are to translate it thus: How beautifull are thy steps, or thy feete with those shoes? For there is (as I may call it) the note of the demonstratiue particle. They bee indeede a speciall kinde of shoes which she had now on, which make her feete and goings so beautifull. You will demaund what shoes be these? And I

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doe demaund, what be the ſhoes which the holy Apoſtle willeth the faithfull to bee ſhod withall, Epheſ. 6. You know he ſaith, *Your feete being ſhod*, and then he nameth with what ſhoes, ſaying, *with the preparation of the Goſpell of peace*, verſ. 15. The bride had now got on theſe ſhoes, her feete were ſhod with the preparation of the Goſpell of peace. The Goſpell is the meſſage of peace, and reconciliation betweene God and the world, aſſuring all thoſe of true bleſſednes which come vnto him: this dooth prepare and arme their feete to goe through all the difficulties of the way, which are very many, and very ſharpe. For he that hath once receiued the faith and vndoubted hope of the promiſes of the Goſpell, what difficultie in the way ſhall keepe him backe? True it is that the diuell doth make the way exceeding rugged & painfull to diſcourage, but the bride is ſo ſhod that ſhe doth not ſhrink, but treadeth downe all. And this is that which is ſo pleaſant in the eyes of the Lord. In her carnall ſecuritie, when ſhe was on ſleepe, and hee with moſt louing ſpeeches called vpon her to open vnto him, her feete were not ſo well ſhod: for then, *I haue put off my coate, how ſhall I put it on? I haue waſhed my feete, how ſhall I defile them?* Then euery little matter in her way did withhold: but now, let there bee what dangers, what enemies foeuer or difficulties, ſhe will through,

and she will not giue ouer vntill she finde him. And vpon this he crieth out, *How beautifull are thy goings with these shoes, O princes daughter?* When men walk in their owne waies, their steps are not good in the sight of the Lord, howsoeuer men think highly of their owne inuentions: but when the Gospel doth prepare their feet to seeke the Lord, that is acceptable. Let vs then (beloued) get on these shoes, which shall make our feete and our treadings so beautifull in the sight of the Lord. And which will also make vs so honorable in his sight, which he expresseth in ỹ next words, saying, *O princes daughter.* The Church is a most honorable virgin, fit by her parentage and birth, to bee the wife of so great a king: for she is the daughter of the prince of all princes, seeing all the faithfull are borne of God. Indeede there is no worldly birth nor parentage of that dignitie to make a meet spouse for Christ, for what are men in themselues: but the heauenly birth, which is not of the will of man, but of God, is of most high dignitie. The soule which is borne of God, is neerely ioyned vnto Christ, for the regeneration is in Christ. Therefore (I say) seeke true repentance, which is a most precious iewell.

It followeth: *The ioynts of thy thighs are like iewels, the worke of the hands of a cunning workman.* Here also is a word not found elsewhere in the Scriptures. It is translated in our English, *the*

ioynts

ioynts. The word doth signifie turnings, or things that doe compasse about. It may indeede bee referred to the ioynts, or it may bee taken for the girdle. For it was the maner that the bride did weare a girdle of goodly rich and costly iewels. And here they are likened vnto iewels made by a cunning workman. Then he compareth the nauell to a round cup that wanteth not licour. A childe in the wombe of his mother, receiueth his nourishment by the nauell: here is comparison therefore of a cup that hath also in it for nourishment.

Then he saith, that *her bellie is as an heape of wheate, compassed about with lillies.* Here is fruitfulnes represented by the heape of wheate: and here is pleasant sweetnes resembled by the lilies. Her two breasts are compared as before in this Song. I will not stand againe vpon any interpretation. *Her necke is as a tower of Ivorie.* This comparison doth not much differ from that former, where he saith, *Thy necke is as the tower of Dauid built for an armorie*: saiuing that there he respecteth force, making mention of the shields of the mightie, and here the tower is of precious matter, and of a faire colour, the ivorie being a cleere white.

Thine eyes are as the fish-pooles in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. These were pooles of goodly cleere and pure water, at that gate in

Ierusalem

Ieruſalem by which the greateſt concourſe of people was entring in and going out, for which cauſe the gate is called *Bath-rabbim*. *Bath* is as much as to ſay the daughter, and *rabbim*, is of many.

Thy noſe is as the tower of Lebanon, that looketh toward Damaſcus. This was a goodly tower in the houſe which Salomon built in the foreſt of Lebanon. Here are the goodlieſt and the ſtatelieſt things vppon earth brought in to reſemble the Spouſe. *Thine head vpon thee*, or as ſome do take it, *in thine head*, that which is vpon thee, referring it to the attire of her head, *is like skarlet, and the hush of thine head like purple.* The word *dallath*, ſignifieth that which is made ſmall or ſlender: wherefore ſome take it for the haire of the head, for the ſmalenes of them, and ſome for the laces that bindeth vp the haire. The matter is not great: but in the next clauſe there is ſome difficultie. *The King is tyed in the rafters*, ſaith our Engliſh tranſlation. What meaneth that? That the King is affected to be neere his Spouſe, and to behold her beautie and comelines. Some doe expound it thus: A king would be tyed in his galleries. As if he ſhould ſay, there is not any king that walketh in the middeſt of his glory, euen in his goodly galleries: but if he ſhuld behold thy beautie and glorie, it would cauſe him to ſtand amazed, he would no more looke

vpon

vpon his owne glorie but vpon thine, ſo farre doth thine excell all the glorie of this world. Surely either of theſe doth highly commend the beautie of the Church. If Chriſt bee tyed in the galleries to beholde her, or if an earthly king would ſtand amazed at the ſight of her beautie: then doth it farre ſurmount al the glorie and riches of this world. There bee others that haue taken it thus, *Thy buſh of haire is like the purple of a king hanged or tyed in the galleries.* The diſtinguiſhing accent gainſaieth this: but it ſeemeth to bee the moſt natiue ſenſe of the words. The galleries and large roomes of kings were hanged with goodly hangings of purple, or of ſome ſuch rich ſtuffe: vnto theſe hangings the haire of the ſpouſe may be compared. Euery way it ſetteth forth the comelines and beautie of the ſpouſe, and therefore not much materiall which ſenſe we follow. Well, the bridegrome hauing thus praiſed the beautie & comelines of his ſpouſe by ſeuerall parts: now he doth breake foorth into an admiration and great wonderment at her beautie in the whole, or in all laid together, ſaying: *How faire art thou, and how pleaſant art thou, O my loue in pleaſures?* This is brought in vpon all thoſe former particulars: and therefore the words doe ſtand thus for the ſenſe, *O loue,* or *O my loue, how faire art thou, and how pleaſant*

art thou in euery respect, or, *in all parts*, or rather, *in all these heaped vp in one?* For as ye see, he hath gone by particulars from the foote to the head. First, *How beautifull are thy goings with shoes, O princes daughter?* Then, *the ioynts of thy thighs are as iewels, the worke of the hands of a cunning workman.* After this, he speaketh of the nauell, which he likeneth to a round cup, that wanteth not licour. Also her bellie is compared to an heape of wheat compassed about with lillies. Her two breasts are as two yong Roes that are twins. And so hee ascendeth, and sayth, her necke is as a tower of ivorie: her eyes like the fish-pooles of Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Her nose as the tower of Lebanon, that looketh toward Damascus: her head like skarlet, and her haire like the purple of a king hanged in the galleries. In summe, her beautie is wonderfull in all parts: shee is comely throughout. Wee see beautie and comelines in men and women oftentimes, but not in al parts alike: for sometime a beautifull, a comely and pleasant face, but not so comely a bodie. Or a comely bodie, but not so well fauoured a face. Or if face and bodie bee comely, yet some defect in one part or other. This is not so in the Church of Christ: for she in euery part is beautifull, delectable, and full of glorie.

More-

Moreouer, that Christ dooth speake of her beautie in way of wonderment, it is from the heaping vp all those particulars together (as I sayd) in one. For where there bee many goodly things, and euery one by it selfe to bee wondered at for beautie, how much may they bee wondered at when they come all together to be heaped vp in one? Take it thus, the Lorde dooth bestow many goodly things vpon his Church, he dooth decke her with many rich ornaments, euery one of these is to be wondered at for excellencie, then how much more when they come all together? But here is an other circumstance that dooth augment the matter: and that is from the person of him that hath her beautie in admiration. It is the Lord Iesus who doth wonder at her beautie: he can not wonder at a meane thing. Lay all the glorie of kings before him, and it is but drosse, he cannot wonder thereat: for, what is it to the glorie which hee dooth inherite and dwell in? What is the glorie and beautie of the Sunne, the Moone and the Starres vnto him? Dooth hee wonder at them? Surely hee wondereth at the beautie of his Church; how excellent then is her beautie and glorie? They bee rare things that Princes vpon earth doe wonder at: most rare which the king of kings hath in admiration. O ten times happie are they, which

shall

ſhall be partakers of ſo great glorie. But may ſome man ſay, where is that companie in the world which is ſo goodly to beholde? We ſee in all Churches that baſenes and ſimplicitie which the world deſpiſeth. We ſee alſo many deformities and ſpots of ſinne in the beſt. In a word, we can ſee no matter of wonder, vnleſſe it bee this, that wee may wonder how Chriſt ſhould deeme her ſo beautifull. I doe anſwer vnto this, that men are blinde in diſcerning the beautie and excellencie of ſpirituall ornaments. Alſo they be malignant, and for ſome deformities deſpiſe and depraue very excellent things. Yea but Chriſt ſpeaketh as if all were beautifull. That is in reſpect of the full beautie and glorie which hee will put vpon his Spouſe. For herein the Lorde beholdeth her, as hee will make her to himſelfe a glorious Church, not hauing ſpotte or wrinckle. There is in the faithfull that which is beautifull and pleaſant in the eyes of the Lorde, euen the manifolde giftes and graces of his ſpirit: but the beautie which hee ſo highlie commendeth, and wondereth at, is rather in that which ſhe ſhall bee, which he now beholdeth.

But what meaneth this, that hee doth not onely call her his loue, but his loue in pleaſures, in delights, or in the things which wee eſteeme

esteeme as dainties? Surely, this doth much augment the matter, this is a very forcible speech to declare his exceeding affection towards her. We know men doo loue things, and take delight, but there be degrees in their loue: they may loue things very well, yet that is the highest when they take their chiefe pleasure and delight in that which they loue. So Christ sheweth here, that hee taketh delight and pleasure in his faire spouse, shee is euen a dearling and a daintie vnto him. They bee much deceiued then which suppose that Christ maketh but as it were a common account of his Church.

Then he addeth, *This thy stature is like the Palme tree, and thy breasts like clusters.* The Palme tree is of stature tall and straight, shee is resembled thereby. Also they say that it is the nature of that tree, not to bee pressed downe with waight, but groweth vp the more. Surelie the holy spouse is not bowed downe, nor made crooked by the waight and burthen of afflictions. But wee shall see afterward how hee prosecuteth this comparison, in which he doth liken her to the Palme tree, what a promise he maketh vnto her, and what a blessing doth follow from the same.

And now that he saith, *her breasts are like clusters*, it is to bee vnderstoode (as it seemeth

meth by the next verſe) of the cluſters of the vine, a ſweete and a wholeſome fruite, and ſo the breaſts of the Church, by which ſhe nouriſheth all her children, are repleniſhed with very ſweete milke. Wee haue ſpoken of this before, what the breaſts are, and what that ſyncere milke is, by which the faithfull are nouriſhed. The trueth is, that albeit the teſtaments bee the Lordes, and not the worde or doctrine of man, yet they are thus farre become the breaſtes of the Church, that none can ſucke from them the wholeſome nouriſhment, vnles he take them as her breaſts. I meane thus: Some will ſay, the worde is the Lordes, wee are not to reſpect men: and ſo they will ſeeme to haue the vſe and benefite of the worde of God, to giue them life, to nouriſh and feede them: but they deſpiſe the Church, they condemne her, and ſeperate themſelues from her. Theſe can haue no ſaluation by the word of God, though they haue it in their hands and reade it: for the Lorde hath made it the wholeſome foode of life, as it commeth out of the breaſts of the Church. Let vs then take heede, leaſt with Schiſmatikes, heretikes and ſectaries, wee ſeparate not our ſelues from her that hath theſe breaſts, and which alone doth bring forth and nouriſh vp children to God.

Now

Now followeth a promiſe of the dreſſing this palme tree, and a declaration of the fruitfulnes that ſhall ſpring from the ſame dreſſing. The promiſe is in theſe words: *I haue ſaid, I will go vp into the palme tree, I will take hold of her boughs.* The declaration of the fruitfulnes is in theſe words: *and thy breaſts ſhall now bee like the cluſters of the vine; and the ſauour of thy noſe like apples. And the roofe of thy mouth like good wine, which goeth ſtraight to my welbeloued, and cauſeth the lips of the ancient to ſpeake.* Touching the former of theſe, that is, the promiſe which Chriſt maketh of dreſſing his Church, the ſpeech is framed according to the maner of dreſſing the palme trees: for hauing compared her to a palme tree, he continueth the allegorie. The husbandmen when they did dreſſe and trim their palme trees, went vp into them, and ſo layd hold of euery bough to dreſſe the ſame. According to this, the Lord ſayth heere, *I haue ſaid*, that is, I haue decreed, I haue promiſed, and will performe it, that I will goe vp into the palme tree, and I will lay hold of her boughs. Which then you ſee, is as much as to ſay, I will dreſſe my palme tree. For the Lord doth beſtow all maner of dreſſing and trimming of his Church, to make her fruitful. And this wanteth not effect: for hee declareth how fruitfull and how exceeding ſweet ſhe ſhall become by this dreſſing. Firſt he ſaith, *her breaſts ſhall nowbe as cluſters of the vine.* He ſayd, that

they were like clusters before, and now they shall be more. It may be sayd: how can that bee, are not her breasts alwaies the same? is not the word of God in the Testaments alwaies one? It is alwaies one and the same: but the Church dooth minister the word as it were out of her breasts more abundantly, and in more excellent maner then at another. Her breasts then are alwayes like clusters of the vine, there is in them a right holesome and sweete iuyce: but when the Lord powreth forth vpon her the greatest measure of his spirit, then doth she in most plentious maner draw foorth her breasts, and minister foode vnto her children. The Church of Rome hath remoued away the sincere milke of Gods word from her children, bearing them in hand that it is no better then poyson: and she draweth foorth other breasts, which are full of the swill and dregs of her owne inuentions, and with the same shee dooth nourish, or rather kill and murder. Let vs earnestly craue of the Lorde, that in these our daies he will goe vp into his palme tree, and lay hold on her boughes, that so her breasts may bee as clusters of grapes, yea that the heauenly doctrine may be sincerely and plentiously vttered. There bee many that holde the places of pastors which be like drie nurses. There bee that handle the word so, as it doth little good to the hearers.

Let vs proceed: he sayth, *And the sauour of thy nose like apples.* Men doe vsually breath at their

their nose: then this is to declare that the Church shall breath out nothing but sweetnes. All that approch neere vnto her, shall smell the sauour of her sweete breath. Let vs well consider of this, euen to trie our selues whether wee bee of the Church: for many doe boast and brag that they be true children of the Church, which yet breathe out nothing but a stinking breath. Yea their breath is so loathsome to all that can smell, that it cannot be endured. Are these then of the Church? Is the sauour of their nose as the sauour of apples?

Lastly he sayth: *And the roofe of thy mouth like good wine, &c.* The roofe of the mouth is here put for that which proceedeth out of the mouth. And if any shall demaund, what is that which proceedeth out of the mouth of ỹ church? I answere, it is the holy word and doctrine of the Lord, which she doth professe and publish. This liuely worde is heere likened vnto good wine, which is described in the latter part of the verse, by the propertie and by the effect. Our English translation for the one sayth, *it goeth straight to my welbeloued:* and for the other, that *it causeth the lips of the ancient to speake.* The words stand thus, going to loues, to rightnesses, which may rightly in the phrase of our tongue be sayd, moouing it selfe in most louely manner, and most rightly. For so doth the mightie strōg wine moue it selfe when it is powred into the cup. And then for the latter clause, that it maketh to speake the

lips of the ancient. *Iashan* in the Hebrew dooth signifie to sleepe, and to waxe olde. Hereupon some say it causeth the ancient to speake. Which is no small effect, seeing men that are very olde haue their senses dulled, and are very slow to speake. The mightie wine doth moue & quicken the dull spirits, euen of the aged. Or as others doe take it, that it causeth the lips of them that bee a sleepe to speake. That is more, yea if we consider it in the similitude, it is hyperbolicall: but in the thing represented, that is, the preaching of the Gospell, it is most true. For thus it is, the worde which proceedeth from the mouth of the church, is as strong wine that moueth and quickeneth the dull spirits, not onely as it were in men whose senses are dulled with age, but euen in those that be a sleepe, yea in a dead sleepe of sinne. It raiseth and quickeneth such, it causeth their lips to speak the praises of God, which before had no power that way. O beloued, if we be not in a dead sleep, yet to speake holie things, to speake to the praises of the Lord, and edification of our brethren, we are as olde men: let vs receiue this strong wine from the mouth of the Church, which may quicken our spirits.

THE

THE THIRTEENTH SERMON.

CHAP. VII.

10 *I am my welbeloueds, and his desire is towards me.*

11 *Come my welbeloued, let vs goe foorth into the field, let vs remaine in the villages.*

12 *Let vs get vp early to the vines, let vs see if the vine flourish, whether it hath budded the small grape, whether the pomegranates flourish, there will I giue thee my loue.*

13 *The mandrakes haue giuen a smell, and in our gates are all sweete things new and olde: my welbeloued I haue kept them for thee.*

CHAP. VIII.

1 *O that thou weretst as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother: I would finde thee without, I would kisse thee, then they should not despise me.*

2 *I will leade thee, and bring thee into my mothers house: there shalt thou teach me: I will*

cause thee to drinke spiced wine, and new wine of the pomegranate.

3 *His left hand shall be vnder mine head, and his right hand shall imbrace me.*

4 *I charge you, O daughters of Ierusalem, that you stir not vp, nor wake my loue, vntill she please.*

WE haue heard ẏ great praise and commendation which Christ giueth to his Spouse: first to comfort her, by letting her vnderstand for certaintie that the blot of her offence was vtterlie taken away, her comelines and beautie was no lesse in his eyes then before: and secondly, that it may appeare what a glorious thing in the sight of God true repentance is. Moreouer in the last place, wee haue seene the promise of the Lord, what he would do for his Church, and how fruitfull, sweete and precious shee should become thereby. Now the Church answereth, expressing at large her affection and dutie towards Christ: that seeing his kindnes hath bin so great towards her, she doth euen as it were dedicate, vow, and consecrate her selfe and all that she hath vnto him, hasting in desire, and longing for the day of the mariage. Heere is no more alteration in the Church: but as the Song began with her great desires of Christ, so it endeth. For howsoeuer the

faithfull doe ſlippe and fall, ſwarue and goe aſtray for a time, yet they riſe againe, they returne into the right way.

But let vs come to her words, *I am my Welbeloueds, and his affection is towards me.* The coniunction may more rightly be taken thus, ſeeing, or becauſe his affection is towards me. For in the former clauſe of the ſentence ſhe profeſſeth and voweth her ſelfe and all that ſhee hath wholly to Chriſt, ſaying, *I am my welbeloueds:* and in the other clauſe ſhee rendreth a reaſon, ſaying, *becauſe his affection is towardes me.* His kindeneſſe then towardes her wrought this effect, that ſhee and all hers ſhall be dedicated to him. The cauſe goeth before the effect, and therefore let vs firſt ſpeake of that. For the ſumme of her ſpeeche cõmeth to this much in effect: ſeeing my Spouſe hath ſet his affection ſo vpon me, and freely loued me, when I was vtterly turned away from him, when I was his enemy Rom. 5. When I was dead in ſinnes and treſpaſſes, Epheſ. 2. When I had nothing in me, but that which was vncleane and abominable, Rom 3. Moreouer, ſeeing his affection towards me is ſo conſtant, that hauing redeemed me, called and ſanctified me with his ſpirit, garniſhing and decking mee with his heauenly gifts and graces, and I ſhewing my ſelfe vnkind and very vndutifull towards him, defiling and deforming my ſelfe, yet his loue continueth one, he doth forgiue me, he doth imbrace me, he doth ac-

compt me as faire and precious, as if I had neuer ſinned againſt him: Is there not cauſe that I ſhould wholy be his? No man can deny the reaſon of this. Such aboundant loue doeth craue loue againe. And now conſider what it is, when ſhe ſaith, *I am my welbeloueds.* For though it be ſet firſt, yet it dependeth (as I ſaid) vpon the latter. If ſhe be his, then ſhe is not her owne. Shee is not to liue to her ſelfe, or to the fleſh, but vnto Chriſt. This is it that S. *Peter* ſaith, *that henceforth we ſhould liue not after the luſtes of men, but after the will of God.* 1. Pet. 4. verſ. 2. This is when the faithfull doe loue, obay and honour the Lord. For if they doe not loue him how are they his? If they doe not obey him, howe doe they loue him? *This* ſaith S. *Iohn, is the loue of God, if we keepe his commandements.* 1. Iohn 5. And if men breake the commandements, and liue in euill vices, how doe they honour the Lord? You ſee therefore, howe the Church ſaith, *I am my welbeloueds.* The whole man both bodie and ſoule is conſecrated to Chriſt. Here wee may ſee plainely, that ſuch as walke in wickednes, neuer feele the louing kindnes of the Lord. They haue not the true and liuely faith. For this is faith, when the ſoule feeleth aſſuredly that Chriſt hath ſet his affection vpon her, he hath redeemed and ſanctified her, he wipeth away all her ſpottes, and healeth all her infirmities; Though ſhe offend, yet his loue and kindenes doth remaine. Now from

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the feeling of this, it can not be, but the ſoule is euen rauiſhed with loue towards him, and giueth vp her ſelfe to doe that which may delight and pleaſe him. So that, as I ſaid, ſuch as lead a wicked life, neuer felt the loue and kindeneſſe of the Lord, they neuer had the true and liuely faith. Beloued, if any man be deſirous to be Chriſtes, that is to ſay, if he will loue, obey and honour him: if he will not liue to himſelfe but to the Lord: here is the head and the fountaine, when ſhee ſaith, *I am my welbeloueds, becauſe his affection is towards me*: let him firſt apprehend the loue and affection of Chriſt. For that loue of Chriſt (as S. Paul ſpeaketh) will conſtraine him to loue againe. And before a man do feele that God hath loued him, hee may as it were force himſelfe to ſpeake and to doe good things, but they can not be acceptable, for they doe not proceede from a francke and free heart, they ſpring not from loue. What is it, when a man either of a ſeruile feare, or for ſome ſiniſter reſpect doth abſtaine from that which is euill, if his heart within do loue and delight in it? Or what good doth he, which outwardly with his handes perfourmeth ſome good deedes which his heart delighteth not in? And now behold how forward and readie the bride is to performe her duetie, and to haue the day of the mariage approach. Shee is not the woman that ſhee was before in the fifte Chapter, where ſhee made excuſes and woulde not ariſe to open to

Chriſt:

Christ: for nowe shee calleth vnto him, saying, *Come my Welbeloued, let vs goe foorth into the field, let vs lodge in the villages*, or as it may bee translated, at the Cyprus trees. The Lord did promise in the former Chapter, that hee woulde goe vp into the palme tree and take holde of her boughes, hee would dresse his Church, and shee should thereupon become most florishing, fruitfull, and delectable: vnto this she offereth her seruice. It is vnto this, for it coulde bee no praise in her to mooue him vnto any thing which hee had not promised. She doth not name the Palme tree but Cyprus trees, and the Vines: but the matter is all one, seeing the Church is resembled by the one as well as by the other. Then thus it is, the Lorde promiseth to dresse and trim his Church, she offereth her selfe most cheerefull and willing thereunto. Hee will bestowe his rich graces and giftes vpon her, and shee is euen on thirste for them. It becommeth all the faithfull, when the Lord promiseth his graces & heauenly blessings, to shewe themselues forwarde and ready to receiue them, and to put to all their care and diligence, that their heartes may bee sanctified and purged, that so they may be fitte to bring foorth sweete fruites. The Lord doth call them to arise from the delight of these earthly thinges, and to set their affection on thinges that bee aboue: so the Bride here offereth her selfe to goe forth into the fieldes, and euen to lodge among the Cyprus trees,

trees, that she may rise vp early in the morning to goe to the Vines. She is now so rapt with the loue and desire of heauenly things, that her mind and her affections are carried out of the world, shee will now euen lodge in a continuall meditation and delight of them, yea she will dayly raise vp her selfe early to behold the fruite that doth spring from them. This is a marueilous good estate and right commendable that shee is now in. Before this, she was laid downe on sleepe in her bed, she was loath to be raysed vp. Behold here the difference of the godly after their afflictions, from that they were when worldly ease and prosperitie had taken holde on them. Then the giftes of the spirite lie as it were buried, and all groweth euen as it were rustie: but when the fierie triall commeth, when they be cast as gold into the fornace, the drosse is burned out, they shine bright, they be raised vp and quickened. These things (I say) we may behold in her forwardnes, ouer that she was in the fift chapter. This may teach vs all to feare our selues in our long prosperitie that wee haue inioyed here in this our land. We haue had it so long, that we do scarce thinke of afflictions: and greatly it is to bee desired that such peace might still continue, so it might not bee to our great harme. But hath not prosperitie euen drawen the hearts of the most which professe the Gospell, into carnall securitie? Doe we now say (as the bride here) *Come my Welbeloued, let us go*

out into the field, let vs lodge among the Cyprus trees, let vs rise vp early to the vines, let vs see if the vine florish, &c? Are wee thus ready and forward vnto the search, and imbracing of spirituall and heauenly graces? Are wee so delighted with them, as to make them our meditation night and day, and so as it were euen to lodge in them? Are our affections so fixed and set, that wee doe euen ioy to behold the fruites of righteousnesse? Nay rather, is not euery man almost fallen on sleepe, and doth not the minde euen lodge in the desires of these earthly things? Is not the whole care and studie how to heape vp gold and siluer, how to get lands and possessions? Shal the Lord let vs alone in this estate? Whither will wee fall? whither will we runne? how great is the complaint that is daily vttered euery where, against the couetousnes of those that should bee lights and guides vnto others? The Lord calleth and knocketh daily, to haue vs open vnto him. And if we count it a good thing to enioy stil our worldly peace and prosperitie, let vs cheerefully and willingly rise vp, let vs offer our selues to goe into the field, to lodge among the sweete things. Doubtles there is great hope, if wee raise vp our mindes to doe as the holy Spouse here doth, wee shall enioy still all good things: If not, wee shall haue some great afflictions to raise vs vp: for the Lord will not suffer his Church to goe to vtter ruine. It is best for vs (if we could wisely consi-

der

ter of it) and moſt for our eaſe, to doe that which the Spouſe doth here, before affliction come: for then we ſhall preuent it, and turne it away. And now behold how ſhe doth procced in this matter, longing for the day of the mariage. *Let vs riſe vp earlie to the vines, let vs ſee if the vine floriſh, whether it hath budded the ſmal grape: there will I giue thee my loue.* The floriſhing of the vine, budding of the ſmall grape, and likewiſe of the pomegranates, are the fruites of the graces of God in the aſſemblies, and the ſignes of the approching of the mariage day. The gifts and graces of the holy Ghoſt ſhould be powred foorth in vaine, if theſe ſweete fruites ſhould not thereupon bud and floriſh. And when theſe things are, or with theſe things, the bride ſaith, ſhe will giue her loue to Chriſt. She will giue vp her ſelfe to loue him, yea euen perfectly when the day of the mariage commeth. The faithfull doe now loue the Lorde Ieſus, ſome with greater loue, ſome with leſſe, according to the meaſure of their faith. For looke how much more firmely and aſſuredly a man feeleth the loue of God towards him, ſo much more feruently doth he loue God. And ſo the bride ſpeaketh here of an increaſe of her loue. As his graces abound towards her, and the fruites thereof more increaſe, ſo her loue ſhall more increaſe, and eſpecially, at the time when ſhe ſhall be fully vnited vnto him.

In the next verſe ſhe mentioneth her fruites,

and

and that she reserueth them wholly to Christ her welbeloued. *The Mandrakes haue giuen their smell,* (sayth she) or as some doe take the worde more generally for all amiable flowers, such as be faire and louely: for the Church is as a garden of sweete flowers. Moreouer, she mentioneth the plentie of good fruites, both new and olde, which be within her gates: and that she hath reserued and kept them onely for him. These are most commendable things that she speaketh of: first, that she doth so florish and abound in sweet things, which are all holy vertues and fruites of faith: and secondly, that she keepeth them onely for her Lord. For the true Spouse is chaste and faithfull vnto Christ: she trusteth in him alone, she runneth not a whoring after false gods: but she honoureth and worshippeth her Lord with all the fruites of her faith: *My loue* (sayth she) *I haue kept them for thee.* The Church in this place differeth much from that which the Lord complaineth of in the fift chapter of the Prophet Esay: for there he sheweth what he did for his vineyard, and when he looked it should bring foorth good grapes, it brought foorth stinking grapes. The generall estate of our Church in this land is liker to that in the Prophet, then to this here spoken of. The stinking grapes hang among vs in great clusters very plentiously euery where: for what vices doe not abound? but the amiable flowers, and the sweete fruites both new and old,

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how ſcarce are they? Let vs aſſure our ſelues, that if we be not of the number of thoſe which bring forth ſweete fruites vnto Chriſt, it ſhall not auaile vs, that wee haue place for a time in the viſible Church, and bee named and reputed Chriſtians. Thou art a branch of the vine: but as it is written, or as Chriſt ſaith, *Euery branch in mee that beareth not good fruite, he taketh away.* Ioh. 15. The Lorde of his infinite goodnes and mercie looke vpon this Realme, and ſo dreſſe his vine, that it may floriſh and bring foorth good fruite, and in more plentifull maner then hetherto, leaſt the kingdome of God be takē from vs, and giuen to a nation that will bring forth the fruites thereof.

She proceedeth on forward in the next chapter, declaring what a great deſire ſhe hath to bee in his preſence, and to retain him with her, which ariſeth from a vehement loue, whoſe heat cannot be quenched, as ſhe afterward expreſſeth. They that be of one familie, as brothers and ſiſters, doe dwell together in familiaritie, each doth vſuallie know where to finde other. According to this ſhe ſaith: *O that thou wereſt as my brother, that ſucked the breaſts of my mother, I would finde thee without, I would kiſſe thee, then they ſhould not deſpiſe mee.* The time will come when ſhee ſhall indeede dwell with him, as brothers and ſiſters do dwell together, when there ſhal be moſt neere familiaritie, when ſhe ſhall finde him, and imbrace

imbrace him: and for this time she dooth wish. Indeede shee hath great cause to wish that shee might once come to dwell with him: for the fulnes of her ioy and felicitie consisteth therein. He doth not now indeed leaue her comfortles while she is vpō earth, but giueth her the comfortable signes of his presence, and at sometimes more then other: but she lieth subiect vnto many reproches, contumelies and proud scornings of the wicked and vngodly men of this world. Therefore she saith, *also they shall not despise me*. The glory of the whole Church shall be so great, that her proudest enemies shall not despise her, but wonder at her. The faithful are now the children of God: but as S. Iohn sayth, *it doth not appeare what they shall be*. 1. Ioh. 3. An easie thing it is now to contemne and despise the most godlie that liue vpon the earth: for the blinde worlde cannot iudge but according to outward appearance. And so because they see not in them outward glorie, they raile on them, they reproch the, they account them euen as abiects & most contemptible. But when they shall appeare with Christ in glorie, their glorie shall be so great, that none shall despise them. The diuels, and all the damned cannot but be tormented with enuie, at the beholding of the glorious estate of Gods chosen, whom they had in derision, and the ende of whose life those reprobate men accounted foolishnes, the diuell hardening their hearts, and

blinding

blinding the eyes of their mindes: but deſpiſe them any longer they cannot. Heere is a good comfort for ſuch as dwell among ſcoffers, ſcorners, and deriders of religion. Let them ſcoffe and deride for a time at ſuch as ſtudie to pleaſe God: the time will come, when all baſenes and all infirmities being remoued, they ſhall behold them in another eſtate, in which they ſhall not deſpiſe them.

After ſhe hath expreſſed her wiſh, and what benefit ſhe ſhall receiue thereby, ſhe ſheweth what dutie ſhe for her part will performe vnto him. For a very vnreaſonable thing it were that the Church receiuing ſo great benefits by Chriſt, ſhould not render ſome duties of thankfulnes vnto him. And therefore ſhe ſayth, *I will leade thee, and bring thee into my mothers houſe.* Ieruſalem from aboue is the mother of al, the Church at any time vpõ earth is her daughter. The houſe of this her mother, then in this place, ſeemeth to be the heauens into which the Church ſhall accompanie the Lord. For ſhe ſhall neuer dwell together with him in that familiar ſort which ſhe ſpake of, vntill ſhe còme there.

The next clauſe ſtandeth doubtfull, whether wee ſhall tranſlate it, thou ſhalt teach me, or ſhe ſhall teach me: for in the Hebrew tongue in the future, the ſame word ſtandeth for the third perſon feminine, that is, for the ſecond maſculine. And ſo I ſay, it ſtandeth indifferent here by the

word, whether wee say, thou shalt teach me, or she shall teach me. True it is that the Lord Iesus is in a double respect, the onely teacher, and that is thus, that onely his doctrine is to be taught, and he alone lighteneth with his spirit. But the vniuersall Church, as the mother of all particular Churches, dooth as an instrument vnder Christ, teach and instruct with the same heauenly doctrine. And so wee may take it here that she saith to Christ, thou shalt teach me, (which I take to be the righter, if we take it here to bee spoken of the time when the Church shal dwel with Christ in the heauens: for then there shall be no more teaching by men) or that she sayth, her mother shall teach her, or hath taught her, if one tense may be vsed for another. But what is it that she is to be taught? Euen how she ought, or how she may rightly performe her dutie towards Christ: and that is set forth in the next words: *I wil cause thee to drinke spiced wine, and wine of the pomegranate.* According to the similitude in earthly things, she professeth to entertaine him with a daintie banquet in her mothers house. For that is meant by the spiced wine, and wine of the pomegranate. The spirituall things thereby signified, are the praises by which she wil magnifie and set forth his glorie. The Lord hath no neede of any creatures to set forth his glorie and praise: for he hath all fulnes of ioy and happines in himselfe: but it is his holy will that his creatures shal

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be partakers of his glorie, and that they ſhall ſet forth his praiſe, and the ſame praiſing of him is moſt acceptable and delightſome vnto him, which the bride expreſſeth here by ſpiced wine, and by the iuyce of the pomegranate. This may encourage vs to be moſt readie and forward in glorifying the Lord, ſeeing it is ſo delightſome and pleaſing in his ſight. If our obedience, our thankes, our praiſe, our glorifying God, be as ſpiced wine vnto him, what wretches are we, if wee cannot thereby bee mooued to thoſe holy duties?

The two next verſes we haue had before: the one how Chriſt doth imbrace his Church, ſupport, comfort and vphold her with both hands. She doth reſt in his armes: for, as ſhe ſaith, *His left hand is vnder mine head, and with his right hand he doth imbrace me.* Were it not for this, the Spouſe could neuer endure here in the world. This is our comfort, that the Lorde Ieſus dooth thus, as it were with both hands, or both his armes vphold and comfort his choſen. The other verſe is a charge that ſhe layeth vpon the daughters of Ieruſalem, that they doe not ſtirre vp, nor wake her loue, vntill he pleaſe. There be ſome words omitted of the forme of the charge giuen before, but the matter is all one. She doth very ſeriouſly enioyne her companiõs or daughters, to behaue themſelues ſo reuerently and ſo-

berly in the presence of this most glorious bridegrome, that no cause bee offered vnto him of displeasure, by which he might take occasion to depart. When our Lord Iesus sheweth himselfe most present with his people, by euident tokens of his graces, and heauenly gifts; such is the vnreuerent wantonnes of some, that they doe not consider in whose presence they bee. They bee in the assemblies, as it were in an Alehouse, or in an Inne; so little they regarde the presence of Christ, or holy things. God graunt that we may regard this straight charge laid vpon vs.

Amen.

THE

THE FOVRTEENTH SERMON.

CHAP. VIII.

5 *Who is this that commeth vp out of the wildernes, leaning vpon her welbeloued? I raiſed thee vp vnder an apple tree, there thy mother conceiued thee, there ſhe conceiued that bare thee.*

6 *Set me as a ſeale on thine heart, and as a ſignet vpon thine arme, for loue is ſtrong as death, ielouſie is cruell as the graue: the coales thereof are fierie coales, and a vehement flame.*

7 *Much water cannot quench loue, neither can the floods drowne it: If a man ſhould gaine all the ſubſtance of his houſe for loue, they would greatly contemne it.*

WE haue had in this Song the ſtate of the Church here vpon earth variable after diuers ſortes: as euen now calling and crying out for her welbeloued: not long after, wee haue her as it were ſet downe, & the bridegrome calling vpon her to ariſe and come away. Yea

ſometime ſhe is not onely ſet downe, but alſo ſhe is laid downe and aſleepe, and vnmindfull of her duetie. The godly doe not continue alwayes alike: but this we muſt know, that howſoeuer they ſwarue for a time, yet they returne, and their end is commendable. And therefore the Church here euen to the ende of this Song continueth in faith, in zeale, and in performance of all good dueties. Here is no more ſwaruing, here is no dulneſſe or ſlackeneſſe any more mentioned. This I ſay may be noted, that all and euery one of the true beleeuers, euen the choſen of God, ſtande to the ende.

But let vs come to the words that I haue now read vnto you. Firſt in general the Bride doth declare her moſt ardent loue towards Chriſt, in all theſe three verſes. As the words doe ſtand in our Engliſh tranſlation, it cannot be diſcerned who vttereth this ſentence, *Who is this that aſcendeth vp out of the wildernes leaning vpon her welbeloued? I raiſed thee vp vnder an apple tree. &c.* For there is nothing by the ſpeeche to hinder, but that the Bridegrome may ſpeake it touching his Bride, that hee ſtirred her vp vnder an apple tree. Alſo it may ſeeme to be the ſpeech of ſome other, and leaſt of all it ſeemeth to be the ſpeech of the Bride. But the Hebrew text doth make it moſt cleare and out of all doubt and controuerſie, that it is the Bride which ſpeaketh: becauſe this clauſe, *I raiſed thee vp &c.* and alſo this,

Thy

Thy mother conceiued thee, are ſpoken in the maſculine gender, as to a man, and not as vnto a woman. In her firſt wordes then ſhe ſetteth forth the vehemencie of her loue, as it were by a compariſon; ſaying, *Who is ſhe* (for ſo the words are) *that commeth vp &c.* As if ſhe ſhould ſay, where is ſhe to be found that hath ſhewed the like loue to her welbeloued that I haue ſhewed vnto mine? Where is there any Bride that hath by ſuch effectes declared her loue to her Bridegrome, as I haue to mine? That hath taken ſuch trauaile and indured ſo many afflictions, paſſed through ſo great perilles, to come to her Spouſe, as I haue vnto mine? What then will ſome man ſay, is this the humilitie of the Church? Doth ſhe now glory and boaſt what ſhee doth for Chriſt? This her boaſting is not in her ſelfe, or in her owne merits, or in any vpbraiding manner what ſhe had done for Chriſt: it is not contrary vnto humilitie. For the faithfull when they haue bene very feruent in loue and zeale towardes Chriſt, & haue indured great thinges for his ſake, may to their comforte both remember and euen mention to the Lord, what they haue endured & gone throughfor his ſake. For withall they do acknowledge, and that vnfainedly, that they haue beenenabled & made fit thereunto by his grace: & ſo their glorying is not in themſelues, but in the Lorde. Moreouer, when wee can rightly call to minde & mention what hard things wee haue willingly endured for

the loue of Christ, it boldeneth vs to make request vnto him. For this matter, reade the last Chapter of Nehemiah, where you shal finde how he reckoneth vp what, & what he had done, and then prayeth to the Lord to remember him therein, and in verse 22. he craueth that he would pardon him according to his great mercie, whereby it appeareth that Nehemiah did not mention his well doing, as it were to stand in his owne desarts: for why then shoulde hee pray the Lord to pardon him, according to his great mercie. Euen so the Church here, mentioning what shee hath done for Christ, doth not glorie in her selfe. Now marke with what speech she vttereth the effectes of her loue: *Who is she that commeth vp out of the wildernesse, leaning vpon her welbeloued*, or as the word may be expounded, accompanying her welbeloued. Who is she that to find her Welbeloued and to be in his company, hath ascended out of the wildernesse? All the difficultie of the worke, which declareth her most vehement loue, is, in ascending for his sake out of the wildernesse. What is then this wildernesse? It is the worlde, and all worldly desires. Is that, may some man say, such a great matter, that she ascendeth out of this world to seeke Christ? Yea, if you doe well consider what it includeth in it, you will confesse that shee may well demaunde who shee is that hath euer done the like? You know what our Sauiour saith, that *Except a man*

deny

deny himselfe, except hee forsake father and mother, wife and children, houses and landes, yea and his life, and take vp his crosse to followe him, he cannot be his disciple. All this is here included in this one speech of the Bride, when shee saith, *that ascendeth out of the wildernesse.* He that ascendeth out of the wildernesse, denieth himselfe, for the loue he beareth to Christ, hee mortifieth and subdueth all the sinfull lustes of the flesh, he renounceth the delightes and pleasures of sinne, which are so sweete vnto the naturall man. And rather then he will denie the trueth of Christ, hee will loose and forsake all thinges that are the deerest vnto him in the world, yea, euen life it selfe, although it be with all exquisite torments. Wee may see then that this is no small thing, that shee ascendeth vp out of the wildernesse. They that for the loue of Christ forsake carnall pleasures, mortifie the lustes of the flesh, forgoe worldly commodities, endure all reproches and bitter persecutions euen vnto death, ascend vp out of the wildernesse, for to associate themselues to Christ: and it is a wonderfull vehement loue that carrieth them so farre. Shee may well say then, who is shee that ascendeth vp out of the wildernesse accompanying her welbeloued? For what Bride is there that hath for her welbeloued, or to accompany her welbeloued, indured such things? Let vs marke well the speeche of the Church in this place, because there be many which professe

to loue Christ, which yet doo not ioyne themselues in societie with him to ascend vp out of the wildernes. They professe the gospell, but yet they take all delights and pleasures of the flesh, that they can: they liue euen as other men here in their worldly course doo liue: surely these are not like the bride.

The other part of her speech is harder, when she saith, *I raised thee vp vnder an apple tree, there thy mother conceiued thee, there she, &c.* First, we must obserue, that the bride speaketh as a spouse that had sought vp her welbeloued, and found him, resting vnder an apple tree: she raiseth him vp, to goe with him into the heauenly palaces: for thither in heart and affection doo the godly, euen while they liue here, ascend vp with Christ, when they haue sought and found him. That she saith, vnder an apple tree, wee must vnderstand, that the apple tree of olde hath been dedicate to loue. So that in this we may consider the loue in which Christ resteth towards his Churche: for were it not for that vnchangeable loue which he beareth towards her, how should she finde him, or where should shee finde him? She vsed another speech before in this song, and said that loue was his banner ouer her. By his loue she is drawne vnto him, euen as the souldiers doo assemble vnto their banner, or ensigne when it is spred. She here raiseth him vp vnder an apple tree: all is to bee referred vnto his great loue; by that shee is

drawne

drawne vnto him, by that ſhe findeth him, and by that his loue ſo abounding, is her loue towards him kindled and enflamed. Alſo vnder this apple tree, the mother of this bridegrome did conceiue him. But who is that mother of Chriſt that conceiued him in this loue, or through this his loue? Surely her mother is Chriſts mother: for ſhe is not onely the ſpouſe of Chriſt, but as he ſaith, *My ſiſter, my ſpouſe*. She her ſelfe is then alſo the mother of Chriſt, for the Church, euen all the faithfull doo through faith, trauaile with Chriſt. That one place, Reuel. 12. doth ſufficiently teach vs this point, where the auncient Church of the Iewes doth trauaile with Chriſt, and bring him forth. The promiſes were made of olde, that he ſhould come and bee borne of a woman, the choſen did beleeue it, and expect it, vnto their faith hee is borne, yea their faith doth euen as it were trauaile and bring him forth. So the Church is the mother of Chriſt: and Chriſt in the goſpell calleth his diſciples, his mother, his brethren and ſiſters: and euery faithfull ſoule doth through faith conceiue Chriſt, and the whole Church doth now trauaile with childe, to bring him forth in his ſecond comming, as the auncient Church, at his firſt comming. All this faith apprehendeth his loue, and therefore is ſaide here to be vnder an apple tree. Theſe things are very myſticall: and it doth ſtand vs vpon, if wee will be the true children of the Church, to looke well

well vnto them, I meane that we come to feele the loue of Christ, and thereby to conceiue him. For if Christ dwell not in vs, we haue no parte in him: and therefore here is mention of conceiuing and bringing him forth. What is more glorious then to bee euen as the mother of Christ? And the same is euery faithfull soule. This ought greatly to stirre vp our mindes to seeke the holy faith. Thus farre you haue seene how she hath set forth and declared her most vehement loue, by ascending vp with him out of the wildernes: such a thing as the like is not done by any spouse vnto her welbeloued. Also we see that this her exceeding loue hath been kindled and enflamed by his loue. And now in the next verse her loue breaketh forth into a vehement prayer, that she may bee ioyned most neerely vnto him, and that hee will alwaies haue her in minde: rendring a reason, that the vehmencie & strength of her loue is such, as by no meanes it can be ouercome: this is set forth by comparisons in this verse, and in the next verse following. First, she requesteth that he will set her as a seale vpon his heart: a seale in a ring of golde was euer made much account of as a precious thing: she requesteth that she may be so esteemed of him, and that he will set her euen vpon his heart. That which is in the heart of a man, is neereſt vnto him, that hee mindeth, that hee loueth, that is deere and precious vnto him. She doth also desire to be set as a seale vpon

his

his arme, that is, as a iewell alwaies in ſight: ſo that now we may ſee the ſumme of her requeſt. She doth in the vehemencie of her loue, deſire to be deere and precious in the eyes of him whom ſhe loueth, and to bee moſt neerely ioyned vnto him as a precious iewell, both in his heart, and vpon his hand, ſo that he may alwaies minde her, and haue her in his ſight: for wee knowe, that whatſoeuer a man loueth with the greateſt loue, that he deſireth to bee neere vnto, yea euen faſtened vnto it. What doo you ſee then here in the bride, how is her affection ſet? Shee doth ſo ſet her heart vpon Chriſt, her welbeloued, ſhe doth ſo deſire to be alwaies with him, that ſhe vtterlie contemneth all things in compariſon of him. What is the glorie and the pompe, the riches and honors, and the pleaſures of this world vnto her, more then vile droſſe? And now ſhe rendereth the reaſon of her deſire, from the nature and force of loue: for loue (ſaith ſhee) is ſtrong as death. This is the firſt compariſon, whereby ſhee doth expreſſe the force of her loue, death is exceeding ſtrong: for if wee conſider the great might of Princes, of Kings, and of Emperors, yea of all the mightie Monarchies in the world, death hath ſubdued and caſt them downe. Who hath been ſo ſtrong as to reſiſt death? Where hath that mightie man been found, that could euer eſchew his ſtroke? Yea if wee conſider from whence death hath his dominion, you ſhall perceiue the

force

force thereof to be such, as that it cannot be vanquished by any creature: the rewarde of sinne is death. This is from the iustice of the most high Iudge; vnles sinne bee satisfied and abolished, death cannot in any wise be withstoode. Could all the Angels in heauen abolish death? Nay they could not satisfie the iustice and the wrath of God for sinne, therefore they cannot ouercome death to deliuer men. Onely the almightie sonne of God, Iesus Christ God and man, hath encountred hand to hand with this enemie, hath taken away his sting, and will at the last vtterly subdue him, so that hee shall bee quite swallowed vp in victorie, 1. Cor. 15. Beholde then the force and strength of death, and see how shee compareth her loue with it. Her loue will not indure (the force of it is such) but that shee must bee neerely ioyned vnto her welbeloued. It will not be saide nay, but that she must be set as a seale, euen as a precious iewel vpon his heart, and vpon his arme. Where there is no loue, there is no ioyning vnto Christ: there is no such boldenes to come vnto him, but there is feare and horror. Loue as Saint Iohn doth teach in the fourth chapter of his first Epistle, casteth out feare: yea as he saith, *perfect loue casteth out all feare.* Then where loue is weake, the desire to bee ioyned with Christ is weake; where it is strong, there is a stronger desire: and when it falleth, that it bee most vehement (as she setteth it forth here) then is there also

ſo the moſt earneſt longing to bee euen in his heart, and in his hands, as a thing deere and precious vnto him. If this be the effect of loue to deſire to bee ſo neerely ioyned with the Lord, and the effect arguing the cauſe, doth not our weake deſire to bee ioyned with Chriſt, argue the great weakenes of our loue? The loue of many is ſtrong to the world, and that cauſeth them to deſire to bee euen faſtened vnto it: riches and honors are their welbeloued, other they know none.

The next clauſe is to the ſame effect, when ſhe ſaith, *Ielouſie is cruell as the graue*. The words are, that ielouſy is hard as the graue: or as we may call it zeale. Wee take ieloſie betweene maried parties, where the one hath the other in ſuſpition, that their loue is deriued vnto ſome other. The bride here by zeale or ieloſie vnderſtandeth the vehement affection of loue, in which ſhe deſireth that his affection may alſo be continued towards her. And this ſhe ſaith is hard as the graue: wee know what power the graue hath, how hard it is, how inuincible: it deuoureth all men, it keepeth downe all men; for who hath had the ſtrength to come out of it? There haue been ſome raiſed vp out of it by the power of God, and chiefelie the ſonne of God himſelfe, who was buried and roſe againe, but what man hath had the power to raiſe vp himſelfe? To this force of the graue, ſhe compareth the heate and vehemencie of her loue: ſo that ſtill ſhe doth ſhew, that the greatnes

of

of her loue will not suffer her, but that she must needes couet to be ioyned as a signet most neerely vnto him.

In the next clause she saith: *the coales thereof are fierie coales, and a vehement flame.* It is manifest that she compareth her loue vnto fire, both to the coales, and to the flame: but somewhat we are to note first about the words. Thus wee may translate them: *the coales thereof are coales, the fire of the flame of God.* In the first part of this (*the coales thereof are coales*) the speech is framed to shew that they be exceeding hot coales. The latter part is, to declare ẏ the flame is a wõderfull great flame: for it is, as she saith, *the flame of God.* She setteth forth the greatnes of the effect, by the greatnes of ẏ cause: for as God is greater then all, so are his works: so then this flame of God, is as much as to say, a most vehement flame. This loue of the Church towards Christ, is fitly compared vnto fire, yea vnto a vehemẽt fire, where there be both hote burning coales, and a great flame: for the spiritual loue is very hot. For where the soule feeleth the loue of Christ, it is euẽ set on fire with loue towards him, euen with so hot a loue, as she compareth it here vnto the coales and flame of fire. And marke well how the flame is the flame of God: this fire indeede is kindled in the hearts of the faithfull by the holy Ghost. If we then will haue these coales, if wee will haue the flame of God in vs, let vs craue instantly and continually

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the heauenly fire of the lightening ſpirit. Then ſhall we boldly make our requeſt to bee ſet as a ſignet vpon his heart, and as a ſeale vpon his arme: and it ſhall not be denied vnto vs. For this we are to aſſure our ſelues, that heere is not a demaund or a petition made, which ſhal be denied vnto her. Therefore let euery faithfull ſoule aſſure her ſelfe, that if the heate and flame of loue towards Chriſt be in her, that then ſhe is ioyned neere vnto him, ſhe is as a precious iewell ſet vpon his heart, and alſo vpon his hand. If our faith bee not ſuch, as that it doe kindle ſuch a burning loue of Chriſt in our harts, let vs not deceiue our ſelues, it is not the true faith: we may ſeeme to haue confidence or boldnes, but in the time of terror it will faile vs. Meditate therefore (beloued) daily, euen with deepe and ſerious meditation, how rich, how ſweet, and how precious the Lord Ieſus is. Call to minde what wonderfull loue hee hath ſhewed towards vs, what great bleſſings and benefits hee hath beſtowed vpon vs, that thereby if it bee poſſible this heauenly fire may bee kindled, yea ſo as that it may bee euen a moſt vehement flame.

And now to the laſt verſe, in which hee doth yet further declare the heate and force of her loue. Thus bee her words: *Many waters cannot quench this loue: the floods cannot drowne it.* Herein ſhe dooth purpoſely in a moſt high ſort expreſſe that nothing can ouercome her loue, it

is inuincible. As it is written of the loue of Christ, that nothing can ſeparate his choſen from it: ſo here the Spouſe affirmeth, that her loue towards him cannot bee put out. And this you muſt obſerue, that ſhe frameth her ſpeech according to her former compariſon, when ſhe ſayd, *the coales thereof are coales, and the fire of the flame of God.* For what fire is there heere, but many waters will quench, at leaſt if floods of waters doe ouerflow it? But this heauenly fire cannot bee quenched, the floods cannot put it out. The diuell doth ſeeke to caſt out all the waters hee can for to extinguiſh it, yea the dragon doth caſt out a flood out of his mouth, Reuel. 12: but all in vaine, for this loue cannot be quenched. O happie ſpouſe that loueth her bridegrome with ſo ſtrong a loue. She can neuer bee ouerthrowne: ſhe can neuer bee ſeparated from him. Wee ſee ſome that for a brunt doe ſeeme to bee euen wholly ſet on fire with the loue of Chriſt, and after a while it is euen quenched and gone. Many of theſe there be in theſe daies. Let vs beware, for he that continueth to the end he ſhall be ſaued.

There is yet one clauſe, that ſhe ſaith: *If a man would giue all the ſubſtance of his houſe for loue, they would vtterly contemne it.* This loue cannot bee wonne away with any goods. The nature of man is much addicted to loue riches, and the treaſures of this world: there is ſcarce any thing

of

of such force to winne the heart from Christ: but the Church heere affirmeth, that if all treasures should bee offered her to draw her loue from Christ, she would vtterly contemne them. This is no small commendation, considering (as I said) how the nature of all men is inclined to loue earthly things. It is most certaine, that many thousands which professe Christianitie, doe contrary to that which the holy virgin heere professeth. Gold and siluer, houses and lands doe so intice them, that they let goe the loue of Christ. They doe sell their loue, yea they euen sell their soules to the diuell, for a little money. Much better it is, that our loue to him be such, as that in respect thereof, we account all things here below to bee but dung and drosse. The Lord of his infinite mercie grant vs to be thus affected.

Amen.

John Turner

TO THE

This Book

Dec.r the 11th

1753

THE FIFTEENTH SERMON.

CHAP. VIII.

8 *We haue a little ſiſter, & ſhe hath no breaſts, what ſhall we doe for our ſiſter, when ſhe ſhall be ſpoken for?*

9 *If ſhe be a wall, wee will build vpon her a ſilver palace: and if ſhe be a doore, we will keepe her in with boards of Cedar.*

10 *I am a wall, and my breaſts are as towers, then was I as one that found fauour in his eyes.*

11 *Salomon had a vine in Baal-hamon: hee gaue the vineyard vnto keepers: euery one bringeth for the fruite thereof a thouſand peeces of ſiluer.*

12 *But my vineyard which is mine is before me: to thee O Salomon belong the thouſand peeces of ſiluer, and two thouſand to them that keepe the fruite thereof.*

13 *O thou that dwelleſt in the gardens, thy companions hearken to thy voyce, cauſe mee to heare it.*

14 *O my welbeloued, flie away, and be like vnto the Roe, or to the yong Hart vpon the mountaines of ſpices.*

WE are now come to the concluſion and ſhutting vp of this Song. Here be indeede diuers things to be handled. As firſt heere is a motion, a conſultation or a demaund touching the Church of the Gentiles, with a promiſe of great glory. Secondly, heere is a compariſon made betweene Salomons vineyard, & the Church. And laſtly, Chriſt doth put her in minde of her dutie towards him, and ſhe craueth his preſence and protection in al her neede. Concerning the firſt of theſe, you knowe that in the time of Salomon, when this Song was made, yea long before, and after, vntill Chriſt aſcended into heauen, the Church was ſhut vp and bounded among the Iewes. God ſuffered the Gentiles to walke in the vanities of their owne minde many hundred yeares: but there were propheſies, and there were promiſes, that the Gentiles ſhould at the comming of the bleſſed ſeed, be receiued to mercie, and be made one bodie with the faithfull of the Iewes. As it is written, *I haue made thee a light of the Gentiles, and the ſaluation to the ends of the earth.* Alſo, *Aske of me, and I will giue thee the heathen for*

thine inheritance, and the vttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. The faithfull in the time of the Law vnderstanding this, are carefull of them. For this is the nature of faith, to breede a loue in the hearts of the godly towards those which belong to God whom they neuer saw, yea that haue been long before them, or that shall be long after them. This loue bringeth forth prayer for them, and a desire to procure or further their saluation. From hence it is that the bride dooth motion the matter vnto her spouse: *We haue a little sister* (sayth she) *and she hath no breasts: what shall we doe for our sister in the day that she shall be spoken for?* First wee are to obserue, that this speech is framed according to the manner here in the world. A yong little damosell is not to be maried vntill she grow vp in yeares. She is not for mariage, vntill she haue breasts to nourish the children that she shal bring forth. Moreouer, when she doth come to the ripenes of yeres to be bestowed in mariage, her friends do set her forth and speake for her. So here she sayth, wee haue a little sister, she is not yet growen vp, her time is not yet come to be betrothed. She hath as yet no breasts, she hath not to nourish vp children. Her time will come that she is to be commended and spoken for, what shall we then doe for her? Let vs consider euery point more particularly. At that time there was no Church of the Gentiles, and yet she sayth, we haue a sister. How

could

could this be ſpoken, ſhe was not yet in being? Here we muſt obſerue, that the decrees and promiſes of God for things to come are ſo certaine, and infallible, that faith apprehendeth them, and ſpeaketh of them before they be, euen as if they were. And ſo ſhe ſaith, we haue a little ſiſter. It hath been noted before, that according to the maner of the Hebrewes, the whole is called the mother, & the parts are called ſiſters: that point is cleere enough: but why then doth ſhe not ſay, I haue a little ſiſter, but we haue a little ſiſter? Is the Church of the Gentiles not onely ſiſter to the Church of the Iewes, but alſo the ſiſter of Chriſt? Yea, ſhe is the ſiſter of Chriſt alſo. For that you ſee through this Song, that the Lord calleth the Church, his ſiſter. Here is the myſterie of his incarnation: for hee hath taken vpon him our nature, he is become the firſt begotten among many brethren. *We are* (as the Apoſtle ſaith) *fleſh of his fleſh, and bones of his bones* Epheſ. 5. So that he loueth his Church as a ſpouſe, and as a deere ſiſter. Yea the Church of the Gentiles is precious vnto him, euen as the Church of the Iewes. Here may ariſe another queſtion, how the Church of the Iewes could call the Church of the Gentiles a little ſiſter, ſeeing the Churches of the Gentiles in greatnes and in number of true children, haue farre exceeded the Church of the Iewes. The Iewes were but one little nation, many great nations there were of the Gentiles, ſo that euery

way the Church of the Gentiles hath in greatnes exceeded the Church of the Iewes: how dooth she then call her a little sister, when she is greater then her selfe? I answer, that she doth not respect the number of the faithfull, which the Churches of the Gentiles should bring forth, but the time: because the time was not yet come that the Gentiles should be called and betrothed vnto Christ: she was as yet, as a little virgin, vnder age to bee betrothed. Then for the next point, there was no spirituall nourishment for children that should be brought vp to God among the Gentiles, there were not the holy Oracles of God, there was not the sincere milke of the word. There were wise men of this world, great Philosophers and subtil disputers: but no true doctrine to conuert the soule to God, or to nourish it vp being conuerted. There was the worship of diuels, and al maner of superstition. There was great boasting of diuine knowledge and high wisedome: but the bride knoweth that in respect of the true wisedome, it was all nothing but foolishnes: and that is the cause why she sayth, that her little sister hath no breasts.

Then touching the care that she hath for this her little sister, thus she sayth: *What shall wee doe for our sister, in the day that she shall be spoken for?* The summe of her speech is to know what preferment, what honour, glorie and dignitie shall be layd vpon the Church of the Gentiles, at

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the time when they ſhould bee called and made one bodie with the Iewes. But why doth ſhe not ſay to Chriſt, what wilt thou do for our ſiſter, ſeeing all the benefits and all the glorie beſtowed vpon the Church doe flow from him alone? Is there any one bleſſing that commeth vpon the Church, whereof the Lord Ieſus alone is not the author? how then ſaith ſhe, *what ſhall we doe for our ſiſter, &c?* Dooth ſhe together with Chriſt beſtow the graces and heauenly bleſſings? This is eaſily anſwered. Chriſt Ieſus alone is the fountaine and the author of all heauenly bleſſings vpon the Church: and yet the ancient Church of the Iewes ioyneth her ſelfe with him in calling and decking the Church of the Gentiles, becauſe by her miniſtrie the Goſpell was to be preached vnto them. Chriſt Ieſus then as the author, beſtoweth the heauenly treaſures vpō the Gentiles, and the Church of the Iewes, by her miniſtrie, is an inſtrument to carrie and to ſpread the ſame among the Gentiles. This we ſee was fulfilled, for the holy Apoſtles, and Euangeliſts, which preached the Goſpell to the Gentiles, were of the Iewes. Well then ſhe ſayth to her ſpouſe: *What ſhall we doe for our ſiſter, when ſhe ſhall be ſpoken for?* Here by the way wee may note, that ſeeing the Church of the Iewes had this care and loue to her little ſiſter, the Church of the Gentiles: and ſeeing that by her miniſtrie, and by the miniſtrie of her children the holy Apoſtles and others, the

Goſpell

Gospell was spread among the nations, it is our part now to be as louing and as carefull, and as earnest in her behalfe with the Lord, as she was for vs: for it doth seeme by the doctrine of S. Paul, Rom. 11. that there shall be againe a Church of the Iewes. We ought then to haue the like pittie vpon her, that shee had on vs, when wee were out.

Now followeth the answer of Christ, touching this their little sister, what should be done for her. If she be a wall (saith he) we will builde vpon her a siluer pallace: if she be a dore we will keepe her in with bordes of Cedar. Wee see plainely that Christ did allow of this maner of speech in his spouse, when she said, *What shall wee doo for our sister*: for he speaketh after the same maner, saying, *If she be a wall, wee will builde vpon her a siluer pallace, &c.* Hee doth not exclude his spouse from this worke, for by her ministerie, it was wrought, as wee noted before. And now touching the summe of the matter, it is this, that she shall be builte to be the citie of God, and a precious pallace for the king of glorie to dwell in. For by a walle and a dore, or gate, is ment a citie, those two parts being put for the whole: and as I said, the siluer pallace to bee builte vpon the same, is the pallace or temple of the most high God. As you know the Church is called the temple of God; and the citie of God. This is the highest glorie and dignitie that can come to

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mortall men: this matter is handled more at large, Reuel. 21. and there you may reade touching the walles and gates of this citie, and touching the glorie thereof. Thus you may see the meaning of this, if she be a wall, and if she bee a gate, there shall be the siluer Pallace, and the bordes of Cedar.

And now see what the bride saith to this: *I am a wall, and my breasts are as towers, then was I as she that findeth peace in his eyes.* The Church of the Iewes was at that time when this song was written a wall, or in deede a citie, euen the citie of the great King, and breasts shee had to nourish vp her children, and God dwelled in her, as in his pallace; but she speaketh here rather vpon this promise of Christ to the gentiles, when that is accomplished, then is she indeede a goodly citie, then her breasts become as towers, for then doth the doctrine of Christ abound in her. It may seeme to make against this sense, that she speaketh in the time past, and not in the time to come, then was I, and not then shall I bee as one that findeth fauour in his eyes. This may bee answered two waies, the one that the Hebrews doo vse the preterperfect tense, sometimes for the future. Or thus, that in the certaintie of faith, she speaketh of that which was to come, as if it had been come. Here then are three things which the bride glorieth in touching her happie estate at the comming in of her little sister, the Church of

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the Gentiles. The first is that she is then a wall, euen a goodly glorious citie indeede, and the siluer pallace built vpon her. For although shee were the citie of God before, yet now farre more large by the multitude and glorie of the gentiles comming in, and being made one bodie with her in Christ. But how is it that Christ, saying, *If she be a wall*, speaking of that her little sister, shee maketh not answer, she is a wall, but *I am a wall*? The reason of this is euident, that although as seuerall parts they bee called sisters, yet ioyned in one, they be but one Church. Her little sister ioyned vnto her, is become her selfe: for in that respect shee saith, I am a wall: I am that glorious citie of God, in me is that siluer pallace, the pallace of the great King. The second thing then is, that *her breasts are as towers*. Her little sister, she said, had no breasts: but now the doctrine is so plenteous, that her breasts be euen as towers, there is milke to nourish great multitudes of children: for when the word of the Lorde went forth from Ierusalem, and the lawe out of Sion vnto the mightie nations, according as the Prophets foretold it should come to passe, the Lorde gaue greater gifts of his spirite, and great light of knowledge in the heauenly mysteries, and very great multitudes were turned to the Lord. In the time of the law, the Prophets did vtter the doctrine of God, and spake of Christ: but not so cleerelie as the Apostles did. Now her breasts became

became as towers. And then the third thing followeth, that ſhee ſaith, I was then, as ſhee that findeth fauour (or as the word is) peace, in his eyes. Not onely her glorie is now greater by ſo large an addition of the gentiles, but alſo the time now draweth neere of the mariage. For the Lord alwaies foretolde that it ſhould bee in the laſt dayes, that the gentiles ſhould bee ioyned to his people. True it is, that at this time, euen when the holy Apoſtles were ſent forth with this commiſſion, *Goe teach all nations, &c.* Matth. 28. The Church was wonderfull glorious in the Lords eyes, and the time commeth on very faſt, that ſhee ſhall enioy the full happines for euer. Here wee muſt conſider that the Lorde dealing ſo graciouſlie with vs, to bee borne, and to liue in the time of the goſpell, in the time of this great light, in the time when the breaſts of the Church are as towers, that there is much to be required at our hands. If wee ſet light by the heauenly doctrine, if wee remaine now in ignorance and blindenes, if wee bee now vnthankefull to the Lord: how wretched and how miſerable is our eſtate? What haue wee to excuſe our ſelues?

Now wee come to the ſecond thing which is the compariſon betweene Solomons vineyarde and the Church. The Church is called a vine, and a vineyarde, and ſo the compariſon is made here

here betweene her and another vineyarde. As King Solomon did excell in glory, ſo all thinges that hee had, did in their kinde excell. His vineyard in Baal Hamon was a great and a goodlie vineyard, and ſuch as he made ſpecial account of, and receyued great commoditie by it. But yet Chriſt ſayth it was not like his vineyarde. The differences are noted, the firſt is, that Solomon let out his vineyard vnto keepers, the ſecond, that he receiued but parte of the fruites, and the keepers another parte for their paynes. But Chriſt keepeth his vineyard himſelfe, and receiueth not a part but the whole fruit alone to himſelfe. This is the ſumme. But let vs conſider it more particularly by the words, firſt he ſaith, Solomon hath a vine, as I ſaid before, the perſon is named, that we may know thereby the excellencie of it. Secondly he noteth the place, when he ſaith in Baal Hamon, but not the proper name of any one place, but as if hee ſhould ſay in a moſt fruitfull ſoyle or place: for Baal ſignifieth a Lord, and Hamon a multitude: ſo that it is as much as to ſay, in a place ſo plenteous for vines that it bringeth forth a multitude of vines. The place is much for a vine, and therefore when the Lord wil ſhew by the Prophet that he did all thinges to his vineyard to make it bring forth good fruite, he doth begin with the place, for the Prophet ſaith, *My beloued hath a vine. Bekeren ben ſhamen.* Eſay 5.

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Which is as much to say worde for worde, in an horne, the sonne of fatnesse. The horne is the corner of an hill, the other is, that it is very fatte. Then next hee saith, that Solomon let foorth his vineyard vnto keepers. For although King Solomon made great account of his vineyard, yet he did not dwell in it, and keepe it himselfe. Hee was not so much delighted with it, as alwayes to haue it in his presence, and neuer out of his sight. For hee let it out to keepers. These keepers and dressers of the vineyard must haue their hire, and therefore it is sayde that they bring euery one a thousand peeces, or sickles of siluer, and part they reserue to themselues, as hee sayth, two hundred peeces. Our English Translation saith two thousande to the keepers, but I suppose the saulte did growe by the Printers, setting two thousande for two hundreth, and not by the translators, seeing there is not any thing in the words which might leade them to say two thousand. Now come to the reddition. *But my vineyarde which is mine* (saith the Lord) *is before me.* Here is the dissimilitude: the vineyard of Christ, euen his church, his deare Spouse, which appertaineth onely to him, is before him, or alwayes in his presence, he is so delighted therewith, he taketh such comfort and solace therein, and it is so deare and precious vnto him, that he is alwayes present with it, and neuer absent from it one minute, he watcheth and

keepeth

keepeth it himselfe, and dwelleth in it. Solomon let forth his vnto keepers, but Christ doth not let foorth his. And as his eye is alwayes vpon it to keepe it, so he hath the whole fruites to himselfe. Solomon had his parte, and the keepers theirs, but not so in this vine, for the whole commeth to Christ. I neede not stand here to shewe in many wordes how precious and how deare this vine is to the Lord, that he keepeth it himselfe, and how faithfull the Church is, which doth bring forth her fruits to none but to him. Also I will not stay vpon this, to shewe that Christ being alwayes present with his Church, and not letting it forth vnto keepers, how wicked and blasphemous that doctrine of the Romish Church is, that affirmeth the Pope to be Christes vicar: as if Christ were absent and had let foorth this vineyard vnto him to keepe. Hereupon he challengeth that he is put in truste to doe what hee will. Christ saith here that his vine is before him, his eye is neuer off from it, he keepeth it himselfe, it is not let foorth to keepers, as if he were absent like King Solomon frō his vine. *Behold* (saith he) *I am with you vnto the ende of the worlde.* Matth. 28. And he appeareth to Saint Iohn in the middest of the seuen golden candlestickes which are the seuen Churches. Reuel. 1. You may easily then discerne what a monster the Pope is, which will needes bee his Vicar, which is, one in his stead to doe that which hee

himselfe

himselfe should doe if hee were present. Here is Antichrist, that is, one that taketh vpon him to be in Christes stead, and yet is an aduersary. For vnder pretence of doing the duetie of an head, hee draweth all from Christ to receiue his lawes and to put their trust in him. Let this Monster passe with his seduced company, which are not the spouse of Christ, but his owne spouse. It may here be demaunded, doth not Christ let forth his vineyard to dressers? Did not Paul plant and Apollo water? doe not all faithfull pastors and teachers shew their duetie in keeping this vine? I answere, it is most certaine that the Prophets, the Apostles and all holy teachers may after a sorte bee called keepers and dressers of this Vine: but yet no further, but as instruments whom Christ vseth: for he is present with them, he worketh by them: and therefore hee holdeth the seuen starres in his right hand, which are the Angels of the seuen Churches Reuel. 1. The keepers of Solomons vine do keepe it and dresse it in his absence: but the keepers of Christes vine can doe nothing, vnlesse he be with them and worke by them. As I said before, they be but instruments, he vseth them, he is alway present, and doth worke by them. Also, it may for the other parte be said: shall not the faithfull teachers receiue reward for their labours. Yes there bee promises of great rewarde vnto all that doe performe their dutie in that office. Is not

that reward some part of the fruite which the vine bringeth forth? No, this reward is promised and giuen by the Lorde, it commeth not by men. And thus much for this matter.

Now to the last thing of all in the conclusion, which is in two parts: whereof the former is the voice of the bridegrome calling vpon his spouse to performe her dutie: and the latter is the speech of the bride, craving his presence and speedy ayd in all her need. His words are these: *O thou that dwellest in the gardens, thy companions hearken to thy voice, make mee to heare it.* Heere is (as I sayd) the dutie of the bride inioyned, yea the great and speciall dutie: but it is darke to be vnderstood, because our English translation hath somewhat swarued in the last word of the sentence: for it saith, *make mee to heare it*, adding this particle (*it*) which is not in the Hebrew. The word indeede is, *make me heare*, in the most vsuall sense: and it doth signifie to preach, because they that preach, make those to heare, whom they preach vnto. In this place therefore wee may take it thus; preach me: for that is the great office of the Church, to publish Christ. But wee will come to it in order as the words doe stand. *O thou that dwellest in the gardens.* The whole Church is called a garden full of all sweet plants, as wee had before in this Song. The particular Churches, which are the parts of the whole, bee

called

called gardens. Now, because the vniuersall Church vpon earth, euen the Spouse, is spread ouer all, she is sayd to dwell in the gardens, that is, in all the particular assemblies which know and worship God aright, through the world. Her care is ouer all, they bee all her children, and her plants: and so she is said to dwell in the gardens.

The next clause is: *The companions hearkening to the voice, &c.* Who bee these companions, which hearkening to the voyce of the Church, he willeth her to preach him vnto them? They be all men of al nations and people, which with reuerence doe heare the heauenly Oracles, which the Church dooth publish and set foorth. Christ Iesus in the Gospell giueth this precept, *Giue not holy things to dogs, neither cast pearles before swine.* Those dogs and swine are such people, as the one sort of thē neglect and despise the heauenly doctrine, & do as it were tread it vnder their feete: the other do hate and persecute both it, and those that bring it. From such dogs and swine, the bridegrome doth here distinguish the reuerent hearers of the voice of the Church, calling them fellowes or companions. Here may you obserue by the greatnes of ỹ dignitie which Christ giueth vnto them, how acceptable a thing it is before God, to giue care to the doctrine of God published by his ministers. They bee recei-

ued into the fellowship of Christ and his Saints. What higher dignitie, then to bee a companion in this societie? How may this encourage vs to giue euen all diligence to hearke to the doctrine of God, vttered by the Church? Then that hee willeth his Spouse to make these companions that hearken to her voice, to heare of him: it is as much as to say, preach mee vnto them. The Lord said to Peter, *Simon Ioanna louest thou me, more then these?* And so againe, and the third time. And Peter answering, *Thou knowest Lord that I loue thee:* he addeth, *Feede my sheepe, feed my lambes, feede my sheepe.* As if he should say, this is the great fruite of thy loue which I require, preach me to my chosen. So the Church professing that great abundant loue of hers, a little before in this chapter, Christ requireth that she will shew it, in preaching him vnto his redeemed. As if he should say, of all loue, publish and preach me, lay open the treasures of life and saluation that are in me, vnto those that hearken. Herein then lieth the performance of the great dutie of the Church, and the singular declaration of her loue to Christ, that she preach him. To glorifie Christ, by opening to the world what he is, what treasures bee in him, is a great matter. And because the life of his sheep doth depend vpon the preaching of him, hee requireth it of his Spouse as a thing most acceptable vnto him. Let all the

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true ministers of the Gospell looke vpon this, how glorious and how acceptable a worke it is to preach Christ crucified. How happie are they then whom God hath called to that office; so they doe faithfully discharge their duitie?

And now we will come to the last verse of all in this song, which is the speech of the bride, containing a vehement prayer: for as shee began this song, and with prayer, so doth she end it, and with prayer. For seeing wee haue no good thing of our selues, but all good things come downe from aboue, the beginning and the ende of our song must be with prayer. What other way haue we to pull downe graces, and heauenly blessings vpon vs, but by this, *Aske and ye shall haue, seeke and ye shall finde, knocke and it shall be opened vnto you*, Matth. 7. Our whole spiritual life, our happines & our protection dependeth vpon Christ: It standeth vs in hand then to call continually vnto him, as the Spouse doth here. Touching the words of her prayer, our translation sayth, *Flie away my welbeloued, and bee like to the Roe or yong Hart.* This is not well translated: for doth the Church desire her Spouse to depart speedily from her? She requesteth him to come to her speedily. For the word indeede is: *Flie my welbeloued, and be like to the Roe or yong Hart*: that is, come speedily vnto me. As if she should say, O my welbeloued, thou doest inioyne me

preach thee, and to lay open the rich treasures and glorie of thy grace. I am very willing and readie to performe this dutie, but I shall thereby procure mighty enemies: for the prince of darknes will raise vp all the bloodie tyrants that hee can against me: I am feeble and weake of my selfe, and not meete to encounter with them. Be not absent therfore, leaue me not to their desires, but come speedily for my succour and defence, in all my troubles: for then shall I be sure to preuaile. Whether she call the heauens the mountaines of spices, or whether wee take infor the mountaine of the Lord here vpon earth, I take it not much materiall. The summe is (as I sayd) that she craueth his swift comming from heauen like a Roe, and his speedie aide and succour, to support, to strengthen and to comfort her in all her troubles and afflictions. The Lord giue vnto vs the true vnderstanding of this holy song, and a liuely feeling of the loue of Christ, that we may delight in him, and loue him again, that we may bring forth the sweete fruites here mentioned, and be of his pleasant plants, that when this vaine life is ended, we may raigne with him for euermore in the heauens. Amen.

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